













*The Works*  
 OF  
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# FRAGMENT

OF A

DISCOURSE

UPON THE MEANS

OF MAKING THE POLITE ARTS FLOURISH IN

SPAIN



F R A G M E N T

O F A

D I S C O U R S E

UPON THE MEANS

OF MAKING THE POLITE ARTS FLOURISH IN

S P A I N.

**B**EFORE I propose the means capable of making the polite arts flourish in Spain, I ought to examine, if the genius and character of that nation be adapted to that end, since there is no doubt but the disposition of nations renders one more fit than another for the cultivation of different arts and sciences. This national genius is not always constant, but is in part dependant on Nature, and part on custom; and these two causes have such influence between them, that one can scarcely distinguish to which belongs the most effect. We know by experience, that climate makes men differ from each other, and it is also certain, that customs and education render useful or useless,



the effects of Nature. It will be necessary therefore to examine these two principles, to know the influence they may have in the advancement of the polite arts in Spain.

This kingdom generally enjoys an air very pure and elastic, which gives much motion to the humours, and easily irritates the nervous system. The dryness and aridity of the earth, contributes also to this effect; and their great sensibility of fibre ought to produce talents very acute, and penetration capable of learning any thing whenever they would wish to take the trouble of studying it. Sometimes this sensibility of the Spaniards is too excessive for the culture of the polite arts, which require a nervous system rather moderate, and which come produced naturally from a climate in the medium, between hot and cold, or humid and dry, which is that of Greece.

The men most adapted to make a progress in the arts, are those who with the greatest facility can distinguish beauty; which is not acquired without having very delicate senses and an open mind; since beauty is a propriety in things, which by means of the senses, give the understanding a clear idea of their good and pleasing qualities. He who has not a delicacy of the senses, cannot receive from objects that impression nor will his ideas occur so quick as is necessary to communicate to the mind the delight of beauty; this being sometimes the only case in which the mind and the senses have equal enjoyment. He who has read history will

know to what excess of pleasure the Greeks were transported by the effects of beauty.

Our senses are so weak, that we have never arrived to conceive, in what consisted the enthusiasm of that nation for the arts. But returning to my proposition, I say, that although the Spanish nation is not so natural as Greece for the promotion of the arts, it has, however, the necessary quality, more than any other, to make greater progress in them; provided they would correct the inconveniences of customs, which are opposed to the good disposition of physic.

Nations, as well as particular men, work according to the necessity, which arises from causes natural and accidental. When this necessity exists for a length of time, the remedies which they apply will last in proportion, and will become customary. These tyrannize over the senses and reason of those who have habituated themselves to them from their cradle, and except from some powerful force or motive, they never abandon them. The first inhabitants of Spain were barbarians, therefore barbarous ought to be their customs. The Romans who conquered this country, introduced there some cultivation, but their principal study was to dig gold and silver, vermillion, and other metals of their mines.

The Vandals and Goths then subdued this kingdom, and introduced there, their natural barbarity. Lastly came the Moors to accomplish the ruin of the few reliques which



the Romans had been able to leave. Then at last when after so much bloodshed the Moors were entirely driven out of this country, their talents revived, and they applied themselves with ardour to the improvement of the Belle Lettre, but no progress could they make in the arts, being deficient in every idea of beauty, the more because continual war, and consequent necessity had fixed the attention and honour of the Spaniards in arms and riches. From that it necessarily followed, that the little magnificence which the King and the Grands wished to employ in the temples and palaces were executed by ignorant and disregarded people, and wanting other examples of good taste, they dedicated themselves to imitate the Gothic and Moorish. Those who ordered such works, were also more ignorant than the artists, because they were in general people accustomed to arms, and to the study of jurisprudence, or theology; despisers of every good taste, and barbarians to the arts.

Spain appeared glorious under Ferdinand the Catholic; but that great King being distracted by the care of war and politics, did little to promote the polite arts. In his time the Indies opened their new treasures, and those riches attracted the attention of all the Spaniards. New reigns, new fortunes, and new hopes agitated their minds, and nothing but gold could merit their esteem.

Charles the Fifth occupied the nation in new wars; and his valor and enterprize intoxicated

the Spaniards for military glory, nourishing that ferocity which is natural to war, and so contrary to that calm tranquillity which the arts require.

Philip the Second, of character opposite to his father, was a declared lover of the arts. He undertook the magnificent work of the Escorial, and generously rewarded the artists; but the customs of that nation, or the constitution of the state not having changed, the love of the arts concentrated in him alone, without being communicated to the nobility, who continued to think as at first, only on arms and riches. He planted also the Escorial in a desert, which could not for that reason be observed but by few; and finally it had the misfortune, that when the Spaniards began to cultivate the arts, and wished to seek them anew, and to learn them from Italy, they had already begun in that country to fall from a good taste; and therefore those who came after that reign adopted that which was vitiated.

They began, notwithstanding, to cultivate designing, and in Seville they formed a school of painting, without being promoted or favoured by the government, but solely by the commerce and opulence of that city, which gave occasion to the ingenious to occupy and advance themselves.

The Sevillian painters, saw not however, nor studied the examples of the ancient Grecians, nor knew not beauty in their works; by which reason they were pure imitators of nature, without knowing in the least how to choose what

was beautiful. Nevertheless, they thought to have touched the summit of perfection, because they possessed the most necessary parts of the art; but they were very distant from the most noble parts. They dedicated themselves to follow truth, without regarding beauty; nor did they know the superiority of the Italian school at that time, which was revived almost anew by means of the Caracci's, when Italy had reposed itself a little after its unhappy state, in which it had been tormented by the wars of Charles the Fifth, and Francis the First.

Philip the Fourth honoured painting much, the person of Don James Velasquez; but took not the good road to perfection, because though he had got modelled some of the best ancient statues at Rome, they were sepulchred in the palace of Madrid, where no one knew or could profit himself by them.

Charles the Second thought of making great paintings in the Escorial, and at Madrid; but none of his vassals knew the art of fresco, or for want of opportunity, or by the course directed to the simple study of imitation; he saw himself obliged to send to France for Lucas Giordano. The fortune, application, and facility in the painting of that famous Neapolitan, led many Spaniards to imitate him; but as the ability of Giordano arose from practice, acquired by imitating the works of all the best Italian schools; the Spaniards, by their means, could not reach their intent; and the worst was, that

seeking to follow Giordano they departed from the imitation of Truth, which they had pursued until then, without acquiring the part of the taste of beauty which was preserved in Italy.

From that time nothing else has been done but to propagate ignorance, by means of bad instruction, and one might almost compare Spain to a country of infirm people placing wards at their boundaries that no foreign physician may enter.

I have rapidly ran through the history of Spain, without touching on the other arts, because painting ought to be the mistress of good taste. Of their architecture, I say only, that although it has been almost forgotten, even to our days, yet it was cultivated with good maxims by some professors. It had scarce began

to be removed from the Gothic style, when Philip II. built the Escorial, an immense and solid work, done on good principles of building, but without any idea of true beauty or elegance. It is an emblem of the character of the prince who constructed it. In spite of the multitude of artists employed in that great work, they exhibited very little the arts in the generality of the nation, probably because they continued to think, that the great and the beautiful consist only in riches; and from that ignorance we produced, that monstrous magnificence of arts of gilded wood, which custom cancelled every idea of beauty in the form; recalling all attention to the richness of the matter.

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That unhappy maxim brought upon itself another still worse of making statues of wood, painted and gilded, with which they disgraced sculpture because in this manner, it is not the form of the statue which gives an idea of their merit, but the colours, and the richness of it. It was impossible, that a people who had always before their eyes such objects, could acquire a good taste because this is not formed but by means of the habit which the senses take, in seeing perfect things, and when they are not such, they are at least simple, and contain the mere necessity because although they appear rustic and poor they will always be nearer to beauty than those replete with unreasonable superfluous and the reason and the senses will have less trouble to distinguish naked beauty, than when buried in a mass of inutility. If to discover beauty one meets this difficulty, much more difficult will it be to discover the sublime, which is the mode of giving a clear idea and conception of a grand object, conjoining rapidly and with simplicity, the extremities of the beginning and end, and comprehending much in the least compass possible.

After having seen the difficulty which nature and customs oppose to the progress of the polite arts in Spain, it is necessary to find the remedy and for that it will be useful to examine again the reasons and accidents by means of which they have flourished in other nations.

The power and faculty of man as a rational being, are very great, but in general he does

not put them in practice except when he is obliged to it from necessity. • This necessity is of two kinds; the absolute and the optional. The polite arts have no relation with the first, but spring from the second; for where there is power easily arises the will; and man being by his talent, and by his conformation capable of comprehending, and of imitating every property and external quality of things, imitation therefore becomes natural to him, and from this the arts have derived their birth. Some might deny that Architecture is the daughter of necessity, but he will then confound it with the art of building, which is not susceptible of beauty, or can be the directress of the other arts as is architecture.

It is commonly believed, that in the East men first began to make Images and Idols for religious worship; but these nations did not exalt the arts to the points which merit the term of beautiful, because they contented themselves with the sole signification of the thing: from whence an image was valued the same as a name or hieroglyphic, without either considering perfection or beauty; and thus they composed certain monstrous figures, to signify different imaginary properties, or to make their Gods, frightful and horrible as their superstition which conceived them. They were a little more exalted during the time of the Egyptians. The Phœnicians added a little more of finish to their works, because they required this in their commerce, and they worked more metal than stone. ~~These~~ in my opinion distributed the arts throughout

all the coasts of Asia, Africa, and Europe, but always in that state of rusticity and barbarity in which they remained until they were cultivated by the Greeks.

Examining why the arts made not great progress among their first inventors, although it is so easy to add to invention, I believe the cause has been, that the ideas of men go always in following progressions and of course if the beginning is bad, the end ought to be very bad, so that the polite arts among those nations who began ill ought to be always worse in continuation; and as the fruit of a bad tree must fall before it comes to maturity. To beginning ill might likewise contribute the deformity of the people, their ignorance of Beauty, and the disesteem which they had for the Artists; who besides not being at liberty to abstract themselves from the form of the Idols, which the priests had prescribed, contented themselves, as I have said, with the sole signification of a thing, and when they wished to make any thing particular they augmented the matter and not the form, making extraordinary and gigantic figures.

The Phœnicians on the other hand thought of nothing but their commerce; for which reason it was very natural that they should range their artists in the class of Mechanics, who served in a branch of their traffic.

When lastly the Greeks began to compose a wise nation, and the Athenians particularly to ~~as soon~~ and had sufficient philosophy to give the true value to works of genius, then the arts

appeared in their greatest splendor. Every one favoured them in Greece. The situation of so many islands which made nature so various and beautiful; the temperate climate, and the beauty of the inhabitants, the customs, the sweet liberty, the greatest esteem which they had for beauty, and the sensations in those minds so well organised, and even poverty itself concurred to that happy combination. Merit opened the way to the highest honours, even to apotheosis. They considered beauty as a gift of the gods. Men were more valued for that which they were, than what they possessed. And the stimulus above all to the artists was, to see that their judges were Philosophers, and that the same who regulated the republic were of the proper class of artists themselves, as happened to Phidia, friend of Pericles, and to Socrates the sculptor, and first of the seven wise men, and the oracle of all the world. We know well the immense riches of Phidia, and the great premiums that were given to the celebrated painters and sculptors. This principally consisted from almost all the works being executed at the public expence of some city; in consequence of which, poverty instead of being a disadvantage was useful, because these people sought not magnificence in the value of matter, but in the art of the professor which they employed.

Although statuary (undoubtedly the most ancient of the arts,) was very early known in Greece, it remained for a long time in a style so extremely dry, after the manner which we see in the Tus-



can Vases, which in truth are, of the primitive Grecian taste, because the Tuscan works in marble, or of alabaster of Volterra, are of a different style. In fine the Tuscans ought to have had that Grecian style, being a double colony, first of the Phœnicians and afterwards of the Greeks, as is proved by their monuments, because except some obscure points of mythology they contain no other but Grecian deeds, particularly of the times heroic.

This style was not general to all Greece, but solely where the Egyptians and Phœnicians introduced it, that is, by the coast of the sea; but inland I believe they began much later to make idols, nor did they receive the art from without, but invented it among themselves, beginning from the PLASTICA.

The principal occasion of the introduction of the arts, were the statues which they erected to the conquerors at the Olympic Games. These they did at the public expence of the country of the conquerors; from whence all their compatriots had interest that they should be done as they would wish. The artists in drawing these subjects had opportunities of examining the best proportioned, and most beautiful bodies; and the glory of immortalizing themselves by their works, united with the competence of others who exposed themselves in those celebrated places, were potent stimulus for the sculptors, and gave facility to the amateurs to judge better of their merits by comparison.

This first imitation of truth gave a degree of

perfection to the art, because the diversity of the figures which they retraced, necessarily excited a ratiocination, and a diverse manner; but the propensities of those people to beauty made them observe that youthful bodies had more of it than old ones, because they did not contain so many signs of human imperfection, and that they comprehended all the essential parts without the minutiae which fatigues the senses and reflection, and that they were of a form more simple and beautiful. By this, and with the cognition which they had already acquired by imitating the bodies most exercised, they knew which were the parts that most concurred to the perfection of man, and the different qualities which are characteristic to each; as for example, force, legerity, the great and little, youth and age. They distinguished their characters in the most simple manner, and they found by that the most perfect style, or to say better, the style of Beauty. Their Deity was all beautiful, and although they represented him in a human figure, they avoided the signs of animal nature; and by that one sees not in their Jove and Neptune either wrinkles or veins, notwithstanding they represent persons robust and aged. When they had to give any altered and strong expression, they never made it excessive, but in a manner most simple, and without altering the beauty more than that little which was necessary to distinguish the difference of another state of the person, and to give a clear idea of the passions.

Since of the many things which man executes

all have a relation to himself, and nothing can delight him which has not some relation to his specie, by that reason the Greeks applied themselves so much to the study of the human figure, and they found in it all that which could appear beautiful to man, and since we have besides the habit of comparing all things with some circumstance of our own, they took from the proportion, rest; and character of man the ideas for all the form, such as for architecture, vases, or for any thing which has a form.

Painting perfected itself almost in the same time of sculpture, which certainly commenced by the PLASTICA. With regard to the esteem which they made of the one and the other, I believe painting held the greatest, as well from the price of their works, as for the honours which they accorded to its professors. Sculpture could not, in my opinion have, acquired its highest perfection until the time of Apelles, by means of Lisippus, and Praxiteles, because it was necessary before them that the other artists should conquer the greatest difficulty in proportion, character, beauty, and majesty; productions of men which operated all by reason, as one sees by the monuments which still remain of that time.

The Grecian architecture had no infancy; and from the cottages passed repeatedly to the sumptuous edifices of the Doric order, which they always preserved, receiving only little variety, because they found not any thing better to accomodate themselves to their solid manner of thinking.

Greece finally was conquered by the Romans, but although these conquered by force of arms yet they could never equal the Grecians in the arts and sciences, whose genius forced the conquerors to declare themselves conquered; so great is the force of merit, even with barbarians. The Romans had never great artists, because they did not hold them in that esteem which they merited, and because the road to fortune, and public reputation in Rome was only by arms or war, and the people oppressed by the class of senators, thought little of the arts; from whence whenever they wished to make any beautiful work, they went in search of some Grecian to execute it.

Among these they preserved the arts for a long time which went declining by little and by little; but among the Romans the taste introduced by the Grecians remained but a very little time, because they debased the arts by employing even their slaves in them, and they became reputed as low artizans, and much inferior to the profession of a soldier.

Some will believe perhaps that the Roman architecture surpassed the Grecian. I do not think so, because I do not believe that the Romans had any architecture proper to themselves.

One should consider what Rome was before the Tarquins. Tarquinius Priscus made the circus, and the aqueduct, a magnificent undertaking, and certainly executed by the Tuscans, who never invented any thing in architecture, but availed themselves always of the ancient Greek,

however less perfect, and also somewhat altered. Then when the Romans acquired a little more culture, they employed the Grecian artists, as did Augustus, Trajan, and Adrian, who were those who certainly built most in Rome.

The composed order which the Romans used, is not properly a new thing, but a mixture of the corinthian and the ionic. The first I dare say had not much credit among the Grecians, because among the ruins yet existing in many parts one sees not that order except in the same corinthian; from whence I believe that the use and the name of that order of architecture has been invented after the destruction of that celebrated city, and that the Romans having made some little capitals of corinthian metal, with the foliages and the figures as we see, this gave to them that name, since they called corinthians, candlesticks, and vases, made of that metal, and although the lantern of Diogenes, and the Tower of the wind of Athens were of the corinthian order, I believe they were built after that time.

The different style which one sees between the Grecian and Roman buildings gives one to understand the distinct character of the two nations, because the last by the pompous luxury of ornament degraded the beauty of the Grecian simplicity, which did not admit any thing that was without reason, or against reason. The aforesaid luxury which arose from the exorbitant opulence of the Romans, and the little sensation which they felt

from beauty, made their style soon fall into barbarity, because succeeded soon by poverty, they lost their taste, by having lost its support. To the Greeks it did not happen thus: here the intire ruin of the nation was necessary to extinguish in them their good taste, because with the loss of liberty, and in their humiliation, they did not introduce barbarity until they embraced christianism. Not that this holy religion is contrary to the arts, but it arose from the abuse which the Greeks made of it by disputing with fury, and dividing themselves into various sects: their sublime genius and natural subtilty o'erbounded the limits of a religion so pure and simple, and passed with too much rapidity from the love of matter to that of the spirit: they changed the ideas of things, and disfigured their customs. To liberty succeeded obedience; to the love of glory, humility; to the esteem of beauty despal of things terrestrial, and lastly to human sciences, Faith. For fear that the people should return again into idolatry they destroyed all the statues which were saved until then from the rapacity of the Romans, the wars, the incendiaries, and ruins. Every thing in short changed its aspect; but with all that they did not cease to discover always the superiority of the Grecian genius over that of other nations, in those things which they did, although they no longer regarded the arts, which were hidden in forgetfulness, or at least practised only by religious persons, who in their system did not aspire to excellence. At last came the invasion of the Turks, and the feel

of Mahomet who with the scimeter and ignorance compleated the ruin of whatever was not to be found in the alcoran, and established barbarity without hope of remedy.

The Greeks who in great numbers fled to the islands of Italy, and to the coast of the Adriatic, and the Mediterranean, drew with them some rustic painters, who knew scarcely any thing of their art, but since they were much more in practice, and more free than the Italians, they went running every where to paint images, which the christian piety ordered them to do.

The most magnificent buildings which have been constructed in Italy after the division of the eastern and western empires, are the works of the Grecian architects, as is the church of Saint Mark at Venice, the tower of Pisa and others.

It is likewise worthy of consideration, that the same accidents by which the polite arts were exalted from nothing in Greece, were the cause of their revival in Italy, although in an inferior degree; either because that nation is less natural than Greece to the very delicate sensations of beauty, or from being resorted to with principles more complicated; which takes from the ideas of simplicity, the only feeling by which our understanding prepares itself for the aforesaid sensations of beauty.

Religion rendered necessary the art of building, sculpture, and of painting images for divine worship. The liberty of the Italian republic inspired the people to think of making great things, and to give birth to the idea, alrea-

dy exhausted in Greece; and to distinguish themselves by excellent works. Finally, this liberty, which revived in Italy in the 14th and 15th century, made human industry to flourish by the rule, THAT HE DOES MUCH MORE WHO DOES WHAT HE WISHES, THAN HE WHO DOES ONLY THAT WHICH HE OUGHT TO DO. A free man with inclination does all that he can, more or less according to his capacity, but a slave does only that which he is commanded to do, and his natural will is destroyed, by the violence it causes it to obey. The habit of obeying, at last oppresses his capacity, and his race will become worse and worse, so, as no longer to desire that which they despair of obtaining.

We see in fact that the polite arts began to flourish in Italy when liberty gave its impulse to the republic of Venice. Its traffic and the continued communication with Greece, made them conceive ideas worthy of its greatness. . . .



## LETTER

OF

*ANTHONY RAPHAEL MENGES*

TO

MONSIEUR FALCONET.

FRENCH SCULPTOR AT PETERSBURGH.

YOU will not be surpris'd; if a man who has not the honour of knowing you personally takes the liberty of writing to you : the quality of artists being common to both is a legitimate cause. Your name has been known to me many years ; yet I have never had the satisfaction of seeing any of your works, and only by your writings does it arise, that you come to know of my existence. I have desired a long time, to know them, because treating of the arts, I wished to find in them, that which would give me instruction.

However, I have not been able to obtain that consolation but imperfectly, during the few days that Mr. Zinowieff, Russian minister at the court of Spain, did me the favour to lend me

only the second volume, containing the translation of the books of Pliny which treat of the arts.

Having opened it, I was struck with the observations upon the statue of Marcus Aurelius, which I read through. The work appeared to me to be well reasoned, and written by a man of talent, who explains himself with energy, but at the same time (pardon my sincerity) with too much acrimony.

Permit me to give my opinion of your judgment upon the statue of Marcus Aurelius. I am well persuaded, that your observations are well founded, but if you had seen the work in its place, and had at the same time observed all the other equestrian statues existing in Italy, you would have wondered less at the praises given to that statue, because all the others, although they are more exact, appear in comparison to it, cold and lifeless: I mean those of the most able sculptors, which exist in Venice and at Florence, because those of Piacenza, and of Rome, of Bernini and of the Cornachini, do not merit our consideration.

No one instructed in the true ancient style of the art, will say, that in the time of Marcus Aurelius they executed works of the first taste; from whence they gave that title to the horse of Marcus Aurelius, only by comparison of others; and you know very well, that the works which are admired by people of good taste, are generally esteemed, not because they are without defects, but only because they have something extraordinary and significant in them.

For that reason, the horse of Marcus Aurelius enchants because it has a certain animated expression, and perhaps the same defect which you observe in the posture of the leg, is that which gives him that emotion and admirable expression, not being according to the ordinary mechanism, but in a momentaneous state, in which an animal could not subsist but for an instant.

For that which regards the rider, he is not represented as a man who affects to sit well on horseback, but as an Emperor, who with an air of bounty extends the right hand in signs of peace to his people, according to the custom of the ancients, and with the other guides the horse.

I am not instructed as well as you in the motions of a horse, because I have not had an opportunity to study them particularly, but I conjecture what is the art of giving them a motion, by the cognition of that of man which I have studied. I have known even in Rome itself some professors who criticised the most classical ancient works, and copying Apollo in the Vatican, pretended to have corrected him by putting him upright, and presently lost the major part of the beauty of the original: but that is not my object at present.

The principal part of your work, which induces me to write to you, is that which you say of my friend Winkelman, which has been felt by me very sensibly, because it appears that your disdain for him does not arise from any other cause than the imprudent eulogy which he has passed upon me: and since you pretend that I ought to take that eulogy as an expression

of friendship, as such I am obliged to reply for him. Besides that, I write to you from the desire of occupying a little place in your estimation, which I certainly should not merit if I could think of myself as my panegirist has explained. Only those persons who have studied the works of ancient great men can presume to have so much merit. As for me, I have meditated upon them as much as I have been able, and find them of the first order, conceived and executed with a delicacy and justness inimitable, and in general are done with the best taste, founded on the reasons of art and nature.

I am sensible of the superiority of the genius of Raphael and the merits of the other great artists of the past age; but I do not by that forget to admire the talents, vivacity, and ease of my contemporaries.

I have proposed to myself to imitate the most eminent parts which I have discovered in others, contenting myself to be the last of those who seek the good road, rather than to be the first among those who are dazzled by a brilliant but false glory.

For this reason I have had the satisfaction to see my works well received among nations who esteem those of living authors, comparing them with the best of the artists deceased.

I ought to be grateful for the favor with which my works have been received at Rome, Dresden, Florence, London, and Madrid, and by that I seek an excuse for Winkelmann, if led away by his friendship he has bestowed hyper-

bolical praises on his compatriot. His style is as it happens to be with every one who would wish to praise a friend; neither ought his expressions to be interpreted literally, because (I believe) nor less should yourself be taken rigorously when in praising your fellow-citizen Mr. Puget you speak of seeing the blood run within the veins of his statue of marble. I do not pretend to justify every thing which Winkelman says, since it would be unjust to support all the weakness's of a friend; and equally so, not to speak in his defence when there is reason. Winkelman is not an infallible judge, nor was he of our profession, and although he had been as us, are we secure of always judging right? If we had this great privilege, our productions would be perfect, because it is not the occasion which is wanting to us, but the judgement; it happening to us daily to produce works which we ourselves are the first to condemn.

That which Winkelman says of the head of the Horse of Marcus Aurelius, perhaps will be ill founded according to the idea which we now have of the beauty of that animal, but I pray you to consider that in no ancient monument is to be found the head of a Horse like that of a Ram, which appears to us so beautiful, and which in Spain they call CABEZAS DE CARNE-ROS. By that I am not far from believing that the ancients held as most beautiful, the head of a horse which resembles that of an ox, as was that of the famous Bucephalus of Alexander. Winkelman wrote some things before he knew

antiquity in all its extension, but as for his honour I can attest that he was incapable of selling the truth for any interest or human regard.

For that which regards the passage of Plutarch cited by Winkelman, I cannot judge in the Greek tongue; but all the literati of Italy, think Winkelman to be so learned in that language that I cannot doubt it. You will besides permit me to say that the French translation of the HISTORY OF THE ARTS, is not exact, because the term ENTIEREMENT NEGIGÉ is not to be found in the original German; and besides that the literal version which you refer to in page 53 does not appear to me to be correspondent to the character of the original language; because I do not believe that any Grecian ever said PAINTERS OF PORTRAITS, and Winkelman translated not so much the words as the sentiments of Plutarch. In short there is nothing more easy than equivocation, and in proof of that you yourself are deceived in the citation of the note page 54 taking for two different discourses, the one which Winkelman makes of me. But who would wish to regard these trifles?

For me, I am much obliged to you for the courtesy with which you speak of me in page 55 and your genteel manner makes me desirous of obtaining your friendship, and to seek new excuses for my friend Winkelman, if he has spoken of you with little exactness in the citations, because in substance you agree, according to the note 18, book 36. p. 75. of his work.

I agree with you that it is very ill done to speak with little consideration of a person so respectable as Mr. Wattelet (or any other) of whom the same Winkelman wrote me a thousand eulogies when he knew him at Rome. If I could possess the talent of writing well, I would give reasons and facts, and teach things useful, without losing myself so as to contradict any one; because it appears to me that one might write a good book without saying such and such a person is deceived; and lastly if you can prove to me that slander is an honest thing, then I will agree that it is of little consequence the manner in which one attacks the reputation of one's neighbour; and I add that sarcasm, and insult, are the worst styles of complaining and blaming, and from whence results always the worst evil on him who uses it.

As to the questions between Winkelman and Wattelet, it appears to me that the last had no motive for what he said, since we always hold for good the most beautiful ancient statues; and I believe if you would wish to speak in good faith you would agree, that the hero proposed by Wattelet is more a comedian than an ancient statue; and if I may speak with sincerity, I believe, that were you not ill disposed against Winkelman you would not have fallen into that sophism to prove with reasons contrary to Wattelet that he was in the right, because you, being of the profession, know as well as me that the character of heroes or of Demigods is of true beauty, and somewhat superior to human nature, and that this

beauty does not admit of extremes; and thus we see it practised in the said Antinous of the Vatican and in the Meleager which certainly have not the character that Wattelet gives to his heroes. I say the same of the Fauns. That cited by you and the Cupid of the same age, are two beautiful youths, nor are their forms that of Fauns. But if you reflect upon the beautiful Faun of Borghese with the young Bacchus in his arms, you will not find there any thing silly; as also in that at Florence which sounds the fymbals, except the head and the arm which are modern. In Rome there are many Fauns elegant forms, and they are not Apollo's as you say, but they might be compared to the Bacchus's, except in the physiognomy and posture: besides that, one ought to make a distinction between fauns and sylvans.

I am persuaded that if Mr. Wattelet had come to Rome before he published his books, he would have explained with elegance of style the ideas which so many beautiful productions of the art by the Grecians imprint upon the minds of every man of fine genius and sensible heart; nor would he have employed himself in adorning ideas taken from the studies of the professors of Paris; and yet I believe that being a man of talent, (as he is) if he had been at Rome he would perhaps have had the fate of being influenced by the *ANTIQUOMANIA* like many other great French artists his predecessors, who contributed so much to the glory of his age of Lewis 14th.



Winkelman dedicated his book to the Arts, to time, and to me. Time alone will show if his work be useful: I believe it will be useful, and I think also that every one who reads his history to instruct himself, and particularly the article of the first book page 313. of the translation, will find much profit from the knowledge of Antiquity; and when also there is found some passion for the Greeks, this same passion will be useful, because the modern restorers have treated of all the good which they have of that happy preoccupation; and whilst this has remained in Italy the arts have been supported with honor; and in France they have fallen according as this has languished, and where it has never penetrated the arts have never made any progress.

When you will have persuaded the world that Winkelman is an ignorant man, and that Cicero, Pliny, Pausanias, Quintilian, and other ancient authors knew not what they said on the subject of the arts, does it appear to you that we shall have gained much by that? The Laocoon, the Gladiator, the Fauns, the Apollo, the Venus and many other statues will always sustain the honor of the Grecians; nor can you yourself deny that beautiful proportion, ideal beauty, facility of the posture, nobleness and equality of the style, knowledge of the bones and muscles, solid expression, the soul and vivacity of the characters, the drapery which dresses but hides not the naked, and lastly the execution which one admires in every place

and in every light, you cannot deny, I repeat but that these are merits which one finds in a superior degree in the beautiful productions of the Greeks, You know yourself what difficulty it costs to acquire any of the aforesaid parts; and wishing to be sincere I will confess that in opposition to such merits, very little is that of expressing well the folds, the flesh and the veins; and lastly grand strokes, boldness of design, and that which is called SPIRIT, (the only refuge of the moderns,) vanish by the side of the solid beauty of the ancients.

I wish you the glory of perfecting a work which will convince the world of your superior talents, and I feel great regret at not being able to see the magnificent equestrian statue, which you are working and of which I have heard such praises, and which would give me, according to my imagination, much pleasure, I wish you would publish your studies made upon Horses, in order that the public and the arts might profit of your lights.

I crave pardon for having troubled you with so long a letter; and begging the honor of your friendship I offer you my services in Rome, to to which place I shall go, in the course of a few days.

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LETTER

OF

ANTHONY RAPHAEL MENGES.

TO

MONSIGNOR FABRONI.

PURVEYOR GENERAL OF THE COLLEGE OF PISA

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NOTE OF THE EDITOR

The following letter is in reply in one written last year to Menges, by Monsieur Fabroni, Preceptor to the Royal Princes of Tuscany, and a person well known in Italy for his literature.

That prelate had written a description of the famous group of Niobe, which the Grand Duke sent from Rome to Florence a few years before. But this prelate knowing of what weight the advice of Menges was in these matters, sent him his dissertation, begging his opinion of it before he published it. Menges was then in such a deplorable state of health, that his death was expected every instant. Nevertheless, he dictated the following letter, with the note accompanying it, which treat of various points of the aforesaid dissertation, that have latterly come to light, and the illustrious author has wisely profited of the suggestions of Menges.

PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY.

**I** HUMBLY beg your pardon for not having immediately replied to your polite letter, having been impeded by an extreme weakness of health, which has scarcely allowed me the faculty of speech, sufficient to dictate a letter, being almost deprived of my voice. Besides the charge which your Excellency has deigned to give me; that is, to tell you my sentiments upon the dissertation you have sent me, is a thing superior to my strength at all times, but greatly so at the present, in which I do not find myself in a state fit for such application. However, the inclination to obey your Excellency, has made me conquer every other regard: I therefore proceed to the execution of your command, and beg you to accept whatever is good or bad in these my reflections.

I have many times perused the dissertation upon the collection of the statues of the fable of Niobe; and it appears to me to be the intention of your Excellency to give an elegant and learned description of them, almost in the form of a panegyric, by raising every beauty of the art to the highest degree, and to give it that splendour which such a work merits. Under this appearance I cannot but admire this learned dissertation; finding in it all that, and even more than I could have desired; notwithstanding I have noted some trifling things, although almost of no con-

sequence, in the annexed papers, with the numbers at the margin of the aforesaid work.

I am convinced that the mode held out by your Excellency in that dissertation, is that which ought to be observed speaking of things possessed by great Princes and praised by the public; from whence in another style, they could not be approved of, either on the one or on the other part, because the criticism alone renders it useful in time, when the force of displeasure which it occasions is diminished, and leaves place to every one to accept of the truth.

If however prudence obliges one to restrain too much sincerity, which might displease others, and injure him it exposes, friendship ought to take away such superfluous regard, and permit that freedom which otherwise would not be allowable; from whence I suppose that with your Excellency I may be allowed to manifest some sentiments, when with another I should be silent.

It could not pass unnoticed to your Excellency the great inequality of the figures which compose the collection of the statues of the fable of Niobe; from the great incorrectness of many of them, and the superiority in beauty of many other statues which we have of the ancients. In the Vatican is preserved a Venus of no great excellence, and one might say, almost awkward, but with a head very beautiful, equal to that of Niobe; and that head is certainly its original one, not having ever been detached from it. This statue is certainly

the copy of another much superior; and at Madrid, in the Royal Palace, is preserved a head entirely similar to this of the Venus in the Vatican, but of a perfection so much greater as not to admit scarce of a comparison. Thus I suppose will be the success of the statues of the fable of Niobe, which appear sufficiently beautiful, because we have not now any of the most excellent; therefore I can never believe, that your Excellency can consider this collection as truly the work of one of the best artists; in the mean time it might be taken rather as a copy done from one of the best originals, and executed by different artists, more or less good, and who, perhaps, also joined to it those figures which are so very inferior. It might be likewise, that they were in part done anew, in the low times of the art, and as much deteriorated by the reparations of the moderns, as by that of the ancients before they were dug up; so that to investigate if this work be of Scopas, or of Praxiteles, is certainly a beautiful topic for writing; but I fear that on sight of the statues it will appear superfluous: besides it is very difficult to distinguish that which one could not know in the time of Pliny, who sufficiently shows that the diversity of style ought to be almost imperceptible.

I beg your Excellency not to believe that I am a depreciator of the monuments of antiquity, or, in particular, that I little admire those of which we speak; much to the contrary, I venerate many others even inferior; but I make

a distinction in the parts of the art, between the bounty of the style, and the perfection of the work. The first discovers the tracks of the maxims with which the ancients worked; but the perfection is peculiar, as the artists are more or less of ability. In considering the first part, I admire almost all the monuments of antiquity, excepting only those of the time in which the too great ignorance of the artists impeded their leaving traces in their works of the instructions of their predecessors. But when I consider also the most esteemed monuments of antiquity in the part of perfection, I do not find that the whole merit that extreme praise which we read, and which was conceded to them by so many illustrious and great men; for investigating more and more their history, as well as the works themselves, it appears to me incredible that we can possess the works of the most celebrated artists of antiquity; and if to my eyes, those which we have appear insuperable, I shall accuse my natural ignorance, rather than cede it to reason, which tells me they are not so.

As Rome was many times despoiled of statues, one cannot know for certain if they lost the works of the most famous artists. All the names which we read on the ancient marbles, are obscure in history; besides that many are falsified by the moderns, and perhaps invented like that of Glycon. I believe Pheidias asserts, that even in his time fictitious names were put to statues; and such will be perhaps that of Lisippus, to the Hercules in the palace of Pitti. But what shall

we say in admiring the sublime Apollo of Belvedere worked in Italian marble? and of so many other excellent statues, confronting Pliny, where he speaks of them as a new discovery of the cave of Iuni. Who can be certain that the superb group of the Laocoon is that praised by Pliny? and although it be, may it not be done in the time of the same Titus, and praised by the historian from some hidden purpose? so much the more as this is of five pieces of marble, and in the eldest son is an incorrection too visible not to be observed.

You will ask perhaps, how these works could have been so famous? it is this which humiliates us, that we have not wisdom sufficient to know and to exalt the greatness of the Greeks; and to say the truth, it would be even more useful to the advancement of the arts of design, that one should regard the monuments remaining, principally by conjecture to know with right reason, which ought to be those that we have lost. To the contrary, reputing them now as the most excellent, many of our artists excuse their natural ignorance by saying, that even in these master pieces, they find not only some imperfections, which effectually they could find even in the works of the most famous; and which are inseparable with humanity, but they find also errors.

A thousand thoughts have occurred to me upon this subject; but I do not wish to trouble your Excellency, nor can I confide in myself for conveying them intelligibly. I am &c.



1. It would be a misfortune, if the excellency of the arts depended upon liberty incompatible with our times; from whence this thought would discourage princes in protecting them, and the artists in executing them.
2. It appears to me, that painters and sculptors of the first epoch sought not grace, but solely the imitation of truth, and successively beauty, which always excludes all rigor; and by as much as we can know of the few ancient paintings which remain, their style was more soft, their clare obscure more sweet, and their contours more simple and less intricate than in the modern painting; the same may be said of the grandeur and elegance of their sculpture.
3. I never can comprehend how grace can be called austere, being two qualities directly opposite.
4. I believe Praxiteles and Apelles did not change so much the forms as the style, expressing after the most easy manner the outlines of beauty.
5. I do not comprehend, how there can be more than one grace in the art. The designs of Raphael, Leonard, and Sarto, merit the name of beautiful; as also those of Guido, and of Albano: those of Correggio are graceful, and those of Parmigianino are affected and studied.

6. The sharpness of the eyebrows is not destructive of the lines, but rather is used by the ancients to show their colour which, if they are black, give a severity, which by that ought to express with the greatest acuteness, the angle of the eye brow. In fact, in the head of Jove, one observes the eyebrow, constantly acute, and in the Deity of flaxen hair, one sees it softened. If it were in style, one should find that character angular, even in the mouth, nose, and in all the other parts, such as one observes in some Tuscan or very ancient Grecian monuments.
7. The good Winkelman was somewhat visionary ; a defect excusable in antiquarians. I have in chalk, the head of which he speaks: the eyebrows do not discover any particular difference ; nor has Pliny ever said that there were two Niobes, one of Scopas and the other of Praxiteles.
8. It appears to me, that the difference of the forms between mothers and children, consists more in the greater or lesser gentility, than in the natural character of the forms.
9. If one admits of very sweet harmony, one shall destroy by that the austere style. The austere can only be in the sublime and at the most in the beautiful, but never in the sweet or graceful style.

10. The breasts are certainly abundant, but as if they were drooping down, which happens with women of advanced age.
11. It does not appear to me that this figure represents man in a dying state, but dead. And the breast does not seem much swelled with muscles, but the structure is solely that of an active youth, as even now we see (though seldom) in nature; but this structure depends more upon the bone of the thorax, than upon the muscles; yet it appears to me that they elected that truth more in resemblance of the idea of the subject which they wished to represent; because their system, and art which they added to truth, did not ever consist either in the increase or change of truth, but solely in the choice of the greatest beauty, and simplicity of the forms. The Laocoon is represented as a strong, healthy old man, convulsed by poison, and nothing more; but the Torso is, as I have seen many times truth itself.
12. I believe if your Excellency will consider well the words of Plutarch, you will not be able to condemn them, because it does not appear to me, that he wishes to say, that painters neglected other parts, but solely carries on the comparison of painters by saying that in making the images of man one applies oneself to express the eyes and all the parts of the face, where, as one might say, the soul resides, not

taking such care of the other parts; but this one ought to understand only as regarding the likeness of such and such a man, because here one treats of a portrait, upon which the comparison goes. In fact we see the ancient statues with the heads of portraits, and the bodies in the most elegant proportion, which perhaps such as had not; and they represent the Alexander painted by Apelles, with the thunderbolt in his hand, had perhaps the face of Alexander, but not his figure.

13. By what I have observed of the ancient heads, these have always the eyes not so long as the good modern heads, but certainly their size consists in the form and shape, and in the exact encasement of true beauty.

14. It is not true, that the bones which encircle the eye ought to be large; this doctrine would be even dangerous; because the ancients have the jugal always rather a little elevated, in order not to enlarge the face and render it triangular.

15. The term FORESHORTNING belongs to painting, and has no place in sculpture, except when one would wish to say, the foreshortning of the muscles in their contractions, and the consequent effect of the fold of a member.

16. I could ask a little indulgence for the moderns, because it is not necessary to abuse ourselves in order to elevate the ancients,

to whom, perhaps, in lively expression one may say some of the moderns are superior.

17. It appears that we do great injustice to Leonardo, Michel Angelo, Raphael, Andrew del Sarto, Titian, Correggio, Paolo; and to many others, when we would wish to ascribe the revival of painting to the Carracci's, and perhaps only to favour the Niobe; nevertheless the profile of the shoulders of the woman of the transfiguration, the other near to the lunatic, and many others of Raphael, resemble much more the Niobes than the heads of the same Guido.

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# FRAGMENT

OF A

SECOND REPLY OF MENGES.

TO

MONSIGNOR FABRONI

UPON THE

N. I. O. B. E.

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## SECOND NOTE OF THE EDITOR.

The foregoing was the letter which Menges sent to Monsignor Fabroni. I have found besides among the papers of our Philosophical Painter, a fragment of another reply which he thought to have given him more fully; and because this fragment contains also some useful information, I wish not to deprive the public of it, esteeming as precious every production of that famous man.

## PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY.

**H**AVING received the dissertation of your Excellency upon the collection of the statues of the family of Niobe, together with the prints, and with one of your polite letters, I had the greatest curiosity to read this dissertation, in which I could not but admire the delicacy of your sentiments, and your penetration into the secrets of the art; so that I thought to have replied to it quickly without extending myself by any very great reflections; but having then considered that you required me to examine the whole with the greatest care, and to expose with the greatest candour whatever presented itself to my mind, I resolved to obey you.

I will first tell you, that your works appear to me so perfect that I find no exception in them, because you have entered into the fable with such vivacity, that you have given it an air of truth.

I suppose your Excellency has had examined by connoisseurs if the marble of which the aforesaid statues were carved be of Grece, or Italy; because if it be of the last, the question in the treatise is answered; namely if they be the works of Scopas or of Praxiteles. I confess, besides to your excellency that these two artists appear to me so respectable, so great, and so excellent, that I know not how to bring myself to believe that we have any work of theirs among those which have remained of the Grecians. It ap-

pears to me also as Pliny has said, that the difference of the style of these two sculptors was not very considerable, because even then it was difficult to distinguish them.

You will permit me to make some reflections upon the difficulty which I find to believe that we are in possession of the most excellent works of antiquity. Every one knows that Rome was several times despoiled of the best things, to ornament Constantinople; and that in the times of Theodosius and others, all the statues in Rome were destroyed; from whence one may argue, that those which escaped so cruel a sentence, ought to be the least famous, or such as were in ignoble places and neglected.

If the excellency of a work could persuade one that it is of the most famous masters, the Gladiator of Borgheze will be that of Agasias, but this name is not to be found among any of the eminent artists: the same might be said of the Torso of Belvidere. That name of Glicon given to the Pharnesian Hercules, one ought to suspect of some falsification; because besides not having any account of a great sculptor of that name, one finds in the palace of Pitti another Hercules resembling the aforesaid, with the name of Lissippus, which makes one believe this to be of the same works to which the ancients gave fine names, as Phedrus says in his Exordium of Book 5.

If the Pharnesian Hercules had been the true work of Glicon, he who copied it to make that of Pitti, would have engraved the same name to



equalize it with the original. • I believe this a copy of the other, from the great resemblance; and because it appears to me that it is a portrait of Commodus. • One may add also that neither Fulvio Orsini, or Flaminio Vacca who describe the discovery of the FARNESIANO, do not mention a word of the inscription; in the mean time the last speaks of that of Pitti. • One may add also that the manner in which the letters of the inscription are engraven, is not certainly that which they used in the best time of the Grecians.

But what shall we say of the most beautiful ancient statues which have remained, as is that of the Pitian Apollo of Belvedere? Shall we suppose it one of those works which have immortalized their authors? If its beauty makes one believe so, it is certain however that it is of the marble of Carrara, or of Seravezza; and although one would wish also to sustain, that some famous Grecian had sculptured it in Italy, Pliny however attests that the said cave of Luni, or be it of Carrara, was recently discovered, and of course it is probable that the statue was made in the time of Nero, and placed at Neptune where it was found; and perhaps its author was not of the ability of the other artists employed by that emperor in his edifice at Rome, where necessarily they ought to have executed the most precious things.\*

\* It will be an error perhaps to believe that Apollo was found in the house of Nero; because if it had been thus, Pliny would have spoken of it, as he spoke of the Laocœon, and of other ex-

The greatest doubt would be to define the marvellous group of the Laocoon; the master piece among all the monuments which have remained of antiquity, and executed with such mastership in Grecian marble, that it leaves no doubt of the superior abilities of the sculptor. On this work Pliny bestowed his greatest eulogy saying, that it was the most beautiful ever known. But one may ask if Pliny was a competent judge? as he admires above all the SERPENTS which he calls DRAGONS; nor does a person show great knowledge who can admire so much an accessory thing, because that would discredit the principal. One may also doubt if that be the same group of which Pliny speaks, because he makes it of one piece of marble whereas this is composed of five.

The name of Agefander is not to be found in other celebrated authors as an excellent sculptor; and since it is not likely that he could have executed only that work, one may with some foundation suspect, that the excessive praise which Pliny gives to that group arises from very different causes; that it be either from his friend-

cellent statues, known in his time. It is more probable that that sculpture was of the time of Adrian, when the arts arrived to the highest degree under the emperors. From whence the place where that Apollo was found, was more likely to have been that magnificent villa which Adrian had in Anzium; in which says Philostratus, in the life of Apollonius Tyanicus, lib. viii. cap. 8. this emperor deposited a book, and various letters of that philosopher, and he adds that that villa was the most pleasing to Adrian of all his imperial palaces.

Neither do I believe that Apollo is killing the serpent Python, but rather that he is aiming at the family of Niobe.

ship for that artist, or his complacency to the Emperor Titus, who this work perhaps sufficiently pleased, or lastly from the impression these serpents made in him, which he solely praises in a work where there are so many others essential beauties to be observed. Among these, the mode of working the marble is remarkable, being left by the chisel, especially in the flesh, without the appearance of the rasp, the pumice, or of cleaning; a style of working which one observes in many other egregious works, as in the Venus of Medicis, &c. All the statues worked in that manner are less finished in the minute parts, and prevails in them a certain taste which never enters into the art, except after having conquered every difficulty; that is, when the artists are arrived to that negligence, and facility which in place of diminishing, admirably increases the delight of the spectators. This style however, cannot have been introduced in the art at the time of the most excellent artists, because the most regular way is simply to begin by the most necessary, to proceed by acquiring lights to express the essential of things, and refining the study to choose lastly the most beautiful, and the most useful, by which one arrives to perfection, which consists in the equal execution of all the parts, in their good order; from whence results a whole capable of exalting our understanding to the comprehension of the subject represented by the artist. Proceeding further, and seeking always the facility of things, and finding always the

greatest difficulty to unite all the parts of the art, that is, the perfect imitation of Truth, with a choice the most exquisite, and with just order, one abandons by little and little the parts most laborious, which are those produced from the rigorous imitation of Truth, and one forms certain rules of practice drawn from the most famous works, by endeavouring to imitate them in preference to truth. This is what forms that pleasing taste which gives an idea of perfection of the art, as well as Truth. Of this species all the works appear to me which are executed only with the chisel.

That which makes me still believe that this style of working marble was not of the artists of the first order is, that in the time of Adrian, when they most studied to imitate them, they worked in a manner very different; they finished with sufficient study and smoothness, as is the Hercules of Pitti, whose style the artists of that copy endeavoured to imitate, to make it pass as a work of that famous master. It is always more easy to imitate the style, than the reasoning and science of the originals; and thus the artists after the oppressions of Greece, failed little by little in these parts. From whence I doubt still more that the sculptures which we possess, are either not the most excellent of antiquity, or else copies. But, not to be too troublesome to your Excellency, I omit other reflections which I could adjoin to the foregoing.

You will no doubt accuse me of audacity, because I exclude from excellency so many ancient

statues which all people admire as being most beautiful. To this I dare not reply with that liberty I could wish. Better would it be for a man of letters to do it who possesses the experience of the art, and has acquired it by a mature examination of the ancient statues and monuments. Notwithstanding, to satisfy you at least in this part, I say that if the Apollo of Belvedere had the fleshiness and morbidity of the said Antinous of the same museum, it would without doubt be much more beautiful; and still more so, if the whole were finished as much as is the head. And the group of the Laocoon would be still more admirable if the figures of the children were executed with the delicacy which one observes in other works. But all human things, however beautiful they may be, could still be more so; and since every one is ignorant of absolute perfection, no one can determine the limits to which these artists arrived who were so much esteemed, and praised, by men so reasonable and intelligent. Therefore as we have no monuments which we can with certainty say are of these celebrated masters, I hope to have pardon if I believe that their works comprehended perfection, and equality of style, imitation, choice of truth, corrections as much as the art can allow, exempt from every negligence, and full of that greatness, which I do not know how to discover in the works that have remained.

These reflections instead of diminishing in me a veneration for the things of antiquity, renders them more estimable, considering by these

that remain, what ought to have been those which we have lost.

One sees also so much science, and mastery in the works done by slaves and LIBERTI who were those employed in these arts at Rome, that although they wanted the esteem and honors which had exalted them so much in Greece, yet nevertheless one observes in these works, even to the total decay of the art, the excellency of their school, which is always deficient in the moderns, and which will render always more estimable the reliques of the ancients.

Returning finally to the collection of the statues of Niobe, I have the boldness to tell your excellency that I believe it a copy of others much better of some of the Grecians; but each of an artist of unequal merit. I suppose besides that having been restored in the low times of the art, and in part done anew, from this arises the great inequality of the work, and of its parts.

By what I can conjecture concerning the harshness, which you have observed in the eye-brow and hair, it does not appear to me that it comes from the style of the master, but is rather done expressly to signify the black hair and to give with it a greater expression of seriousness and sadness to the figure; because if it were style, one should find it also in the mouth, and in the other parts which are susceptible of angles; and that which has been the intention of the artists is deduced clearly from the heads of Jove which remain in all the ancient monuments. All have the eye-brow expressive, and delineated with

force, which one does not find either in the Bacchus's, Venus's, or Apollo's, which the ancients have represented of flaxen hair.

I confess that my feeble talents do not arrive to distinguish the different kinds of grace, although I know that beauty and grace are things very different: nevertheless I understand how they placed in sculpture the contours called foreshortening. But the force of these expressions will depend upon the idiom of the Italian language, which I do not possess as I could wish. Be it as it may, I call in my style the designs of Raphael beautiful, &c. . . . .

## LETTER

OF

*ANTHONY RAPHAEL MENGES*

TO

DON ANTONIO PONTZ.

## ADVERTISEMENT.

The following letter was printed four years ago at Madrid, in the work of Anthony Pontz, entitled *VIAGES D'ESPAGNE* or travels in Spain. Menges having also wished that they should publish it, wrote it in Spanish, in which language he had not a great facility of writing, therefore various things remain somewhat confused. To remedy this defect, means have been taken to correct it as much as possible; however, without retouching it so much as to alter the original style. A few notes are adjoined to explain the signification of various words proper to the arts.

This same letter was printed at Turin, translated into Italian, but so badly, that it gave great grief both to myself and Menges, who, if death had not prevented him, was determined to have translated it himself, and to publish it, to do away the bad opinion which he thought the world must have of it from that translation; because, to the want of clearness which is in the Spanish, there are added, errors, and manifest contradictions.



The memoirs of Correggio were written by Mengs at Florence, to give it to those who made the collection of the lives of painters of all the schools, who, however, extracted only that poor article of Correggio which one reads in their works.

His principal end, besides that of making known the merits of the great Correggio better than it was before, was, to supply what was deficient in the life written by Vasari, and to correct his equivocations. Notwithstanding, many have believed that Vasari did not write that life with all the instruction and impartiality necessary. Mengs likewise believed it, but did not wish to interfere too much in such questions, and contented himself with his ordinary moderation to elucidate well the facts upon which he established the reputation of Correggio, without entering into this dispute, nor caring for the opinion or sentiments of those who make it a national cause to support Vasari.

The practical lessons on painting, at the end, have been gathered from different parts, where they were spread without order or method. Mengs dictated them at various times, in various languages, and to various disciples, according as they occurred in his instructions. Each wrote them according to his capacity; and for that reason, many of them are found in such confusion, that it is impossible to decipher them, and they have become for that reason abandoned. But by that I do not intend to say, that those which are published, are free from error; quite the contrary. I know the disorder in which they are found; the irregularity of the style, the continued repetitions, the errors of language and of construction, and his confused mode of explaining himself. I make this remark in order to prevent the murmurs and censure of certain persons who to vent the rage which the essential merit of the work will excite on their delicate self-love, run after words and phrases. Let them therefore know, that I abandon to them, all they may find here of this kind to exercise their criticism, and I condemn as much as they would wish to condemn. It is sufficient to say, that they leave me in the opinion, that their heads are full of empty words, and that envy only torments those who are possessed of it.

SIR

YOU ask my opinion upon the merits of the most remarkable paintings which are preserved in the royal palace at Madrid to publish it in a description that you are going to give of Spain. You do me honour, and animate me, by believing me capable of such an undertaking, which besides being superior to my strength, is also more difficult than you imagine, principally because I am not a man of letters, and have not grace to treat of a subject so delicate.

You know very well that to me few paintings can appear so beautiful as to others; although I admire the works of great men still more than those who make up the train of vulgar amateurs, with the difference however, that those find an infinite number of excellent painters; and I find only a small number, and reduce it to those few who merit the glorious title of the great.

Nevertheless it is certain that we have all a common right to value the works of the belle arts; because the learned and ignorant have each more or less an idea, that they have to give delight by the imitation of things known; from whence they approve of those which, according to their understanding, have this quality. If works are so inferior, that beholders in viewing them, can discover the defects immediately, they despise them;

but if by the variety of objects, pleasing and easy to comprehend, they delight the sight, then they approve of them: if however they meet great complications of reasonings, of which the most easy guide them to the knowledge of the difficult, they form to themselves in that that ease the pleasure of supposition, by exalting their understanding and flattering their self-love, and they praise as from gratitude the said work more or less, according to its natural and habitual conditions. Thus the devout, the lascivious, the learned, the idiot, approve of different objects, with greater or less enthusiasm: however from things too superior, and totally beyond our understanding, we receive little or no delight.

From whence you may consider how various must be the opinions of men with respect to the works of painting, and how dangerous it is to give with a sincerity ones sentiments upon the same; because every one is bigotted to his opinion of that which he approves, or disapproves, and generally he has the misfortune, that what others abuse he praises, not from affection to the thing praised, but from self-love. Man not being able to tolerate himself from being surpassed by others in his understanding, and not having force to oppose reason, has recourse to the remedy of discrediting whosoever says the truth with the title of evil-speaker, or at least depreciator, or of an insatiable man; from whence it is sometimes a misfortune to see errors, and always imprudent to discover them without necessity.

Notwithstanding I wish to oblige you, speaking however with a painter, who knows the difficulty of the art, and the impossibility of possessing it without defects. I have not the vanity to make myself a judge to criticise those who are of the same profession of myself, and assure you, that I have great esteem for all, even those, who according to the rules of the art would be very censurable; and when I have no other motive to esteem them, I admire them for the courage and ease with which they have executed their works, and which often are not deficient in being done after the best principles. If therefore I attempt to expose some critical reflections, I do it only to be of some utility, of which you give me reason to hope.

First, before undertaking the description of the paintings, it appears to me not useless to give a succinct idea of painting in general, in order that persons little instructed in that matter, may be able to enjoy the beauties of the excellent productions which I am going to describe.

You are not ignorant that painting has been at all times held in such esteem, that the ancient Greeks called it the Liberal and Noble Art, and lastly introduced the term of the BELLE ART, which suits it very well. One has, however to reflect, that painting is a noble or liberal art, from the mental study which it necessarily requires; and the superiority of the understanding and noble mind which he ought to have

who practices it. It is also a noble art for having by its excellence the road always open to nobility, and honour; as many examples prove, in Spain and other places.

The term of *BELLE ART* corresponds likewise very well with painting on account of its productions, because every painting ought to have beauty, without which it will always be defective.

The noble art of painting cannot be compared with any other thing better than poetry, having both the same end, to instruct by pleasing.

Painting imitates all the appearances of the visible objects of nature, not punctually as they are, but as they appear, or could or ought to appear. Its end being to instruct by pleasing, it will not succeed by copying nature as it is, because there will be the same, and also more difficulty to comprehend the productions of art than those of nature; from whence its aim ought to be to give ideas of things produced by nature; and its works will be so much the more estimable, the more the idea is clear and perfect.

All that which art can produce, is already formed in nature, either entire or in part; and although art cannot arrive to imitate to perfection an object of compleat beauty, (which case is very rare) one may notwithstanding say, that the art of painting is in general more compleat, and more beautiful than nature itself; because it unites perfections which are naturally separate, or depurates the objects of all that which is not essential to the chosen character or

the idea which we would wish to give to the spectator. Besides that, nature is so complicated in all her productions that we cannot comprehend the mode how she produces them, nor easily distinguish her essential parts. To the contrary, painting with the fore-said conditions, gives a clear idea of things originally produced by nature, without fatiguing the understanding; which always occasions delight, because all that which moves the senses and the intellect without fastidiousness, produces agreeable sensations; and for that reason, imitation delights more than its prototype. Then of course painting ought not to be a servile, but an ideal imitation; that is, it ought to imitate the parts of natural objects, in a manner, that they may give an idea of the being of a thing which we perceive; and that is done by expressing the visible signs of the essential difference which there is between one object and another, be they of a very different nature, or almost similar. Always when they make visible this essential difference they give clear idea of their essence, and property, and take from the understanding the fatigue of comprehending them.

Also the painter as well as the poet ought to choose his subjects from things which offer in nature. Whether these exist or not they ought always to appear possible; and one ought never to employ the same beauty and perfection of a degree impossible, except in the persons of supposed divinity, in whom is rendered possible

that which otherwise would not be so. These beauties and perfections are commonly called IDEAL, because they are not to be found in nature; from whence it arises, that many believe the Ideal not to be natural or true. Painting always has and ought to have much of the Ideal; to be understood however, that this is nothing more than a choice of the parts already existing in nature, which agree with the same idea, combined in a manner that they form an unity in a work of the art to attract the mind of him who views it, and to place it in that state which the artist would wish. In this consists the artifice of painters, and with that they make PICTORESQUE any natural object whatsoever, by giving it a disposition capable of raising particular sensations in the minds of the spectators.

When a painting has the choice, imitation, and execution directed to the same idea, it will be always a good painting; to the contrary it will always be defective when it is deprived of these qualities. Notwithstanding, it might be of better or inferior style according to the choice made by the author of the objects he proposes to imitate.

All the parts united together which compose painting with regard to the practical part, or execution, form that which is called STYLE, which is properly the manner of being of the works of painting.

These Styles are almost infinite, but the prin-

cipal ones however one may reduce to a certain number; which are the sublime, the beautiful, the graceful, the significant, and the natural; not making account of the vicious styles, although I do not despise the authors of them, because often great defects are found by the side of great merits; and by that we mistake vices, by taking their defects for virtues.

DECIPIIT EXAMPLAR VITIIS IMITABILE.

Horat:

With regard to such styles, I will explain myself as well as I am able, although the subject is superior to my abilities; so that I shall be called audacious to pretend to undertake it; but I do it with the hope of giving at least opportunity that others more able and more capable, may apply themselves to explain these things better than me; and I shall be content in being disapproved of, provided that others may say things more useful upon a point so important for painters and amateurs, to know how to distinguish the styles, and esteem those most who justly merit it.

### SUBLIME STYLE.

By sublime, I mean the mode of treating the art agreeable to the execution of the ideas with which one would wish to explain objects of a quality superior to our nature. The artifice of that style consists in knowing how to form an unity of ideas, possible and impossible,



in the same object; from whence it is necessary that the artist unites and employs known forms, and appearances, to make a whole which exists only in his imagination, and by the known parts which he will take from nature, he ought to make an abstract of all the signs of their mechanism. \* *MODE* in all its parts ought to be simple, uniform, austere, or at least solemn and grave.\*

We have no examples of that style in the works of painting, those being deficient of ancient Greece; therefore we ought to have recourse to the statues which have remained of them, among which the Pitius Apollo of the Vatican is that which most accosts such style; and must have been perfectly so that of the Jove, and the Minerva of Phidia at Elis, and at Athens. The great Raphael D'Urbino never arrived to the sublime, although he reached the grand style. Michael Angelo produced only the terrible, † Although both approached the sublime in their ideas and inventions, yet their forms

\* Mengs meant by *MODE* the same as style, or manner of execution. By *AUSTERE* he meant to say that in the execution one has to give the form an air of simplicity; to the contours lines less curves or less waving than in the graceful subjects; and to the expression a character of majesty and greatness, rejecting every minutia and affectation.

† We have in another place explained *GRAND* style. *TERRIBLE* is used by way of Metaphor of that style which in composition chooses the posture most forced, and extraordinary and in executing the lines less soft; in the expression, the point most extreme, and in the colouring the tone less pleasing: it is the contrary to softness and grace; nor can any one deny that this style of Michael Angelo was not very excellent and very terrible.

were not correspondent; although the execution, particularly of Raphael, was very natural for that style. Hannibal Caracci by imitating of the forms of the ancient statues approached it sometimes, but without uniting the sublimity of ideas with the style: the same might be said of Domenico Zampieri.

### BEAUTIFUL STYLE.

'Beauty is the idea or imagination of possible perfection.' Perfection never renders itself visible without producing beauty; nor produces beauty without showing the good quality or or perfection of the object in which it is found.

Beauty exalts our understanding to the knowledge of the good qualities of objects; which without that would have remained hidden, and difficult to comprehend. The style proper to express such objects ought to be elegant, and void of superfluity; without wanting however, any part essential, and by distinguishing every thing according to its dignity, or most useful quality. Nevertheless, the execution ought to be individual, and softer than the sublime style, yet in a manner sufficient to give a clear idea of possible perfection.

Nor is less that style of beauty found perfect in the works of the moderns. If those of Zeuxis had been preserved, particularly his Helen, one might have been able perhaps to form a just idea of it. The Grecian statues which remain are gene-

rally more or less of such a style, according as the character of each permits it; and although we have very many expressions of the passions, as in the Laocoon, they still discover beauty in the forms, although in a violent and altered state.

It appears that beauty changes its characters according to the subject in which it is found; thus we see it approaching to the sublime in the Apollo of the Vatican: in the Meleager one sees human and heroical beauty; In the Niobe, female beauty; in the Appollo and in the Venus of Medicis the beauty of graceful subjects. Very beautiful are the Castor and Pollux at Saint Ildefonso; the wrestling at Florence; the Gladiator of Borghese; and even the Pharnesian Hercules. All works differ in character, but nevertheless one knows that their authors never forget to unite them with beauty.

The ideas of Raphael are little superior to the objects which he saw in nature, nor are they very exquisite. Annibale was beautiful in the bodies of his men; Albano in the figures of his women; Guido Reni in the heads of the same, but more however in the forms; than the style.

### GRACEFUL STYLE.

Grace is a word equivalent with benificence, from whence it arises, that the objects which appear graceful are those which by their appearance give an idea of that quality. In this style

the figures ought to have the motions moderate, easy, lovely, and more humble than arrogant. The execution ought not to be treated with much force, and ought to be also easy, soft, and varied, and without minutiae.

This was the part which the Grecians confess to have been possessed in a superior degree by Appelles; and although that artist was very modest, still he gloried in possessing it; saying with ingenuity, that others surpassed him in some parts but that he conquered in grace. The idea which the ancients had of grace was very different from that which we have of it; because in comparison with theirs, ours is a kind of affectation which cannot subsist in perfect beauty without embarrassing it; consisting in certain gestures, actions, and difficult postures, unnatural, or violent, or at least like those of children, as we see sometimes, in great Correggio himself, and more in Parmigianino, and in others who have followed that track. In the ancients there was not that grace; it was a character to give the same idea of beauty which beauty gives of perfection, by presenting the pleasing parts of beautiful objects. The most beautiful Grecian examples of that style, are the Venus of Medicis, the Apollo, the Hermaphrodite of the villa of Borghese, and that which remains antique of the beautiful Cupid of the same villa; as also a Nymph in the collection of San Ildefonso, and in various other statues. Raphael possessed true Grace in the motions of figures; he wanted however a certain elegance in the

forms and contours, and his execution is in general too powerful and determinate.\* Correggio may serve as an example in the contours, clear obscure, and in all that, which is comprehended under the term of execution. He possessed in an eminent degree, that part of which Appelles so much gloried when he praised Protogenes, saying that he was equal to him in every thing, but that he did not know how to take his hand off from a work; meaning that too much labour, and too much polish, takes from the grace of works, and are contrary to that style.

#### SIGNIFICANT AND EXPRESSIVE STYLE.

Significant style is that which has expression for its principal end. Its execution requires determination, and conclusion.

Raphael may serve in that as a perfect example, being never in that part surpassed by any one. The ancient Greeks preferred beauty to expression, so much so, that they endeavoured not to brutalize the forms by alterations which

\* DETERMINATE execution signifies that which marks things to a certain point, and leaves the rest for imagination. The spectator as well as the reader likes to have something left for supposition, and to suppose and find out of himself: from whence the author who exhausts on all sides his matter, disgusts the reader by mortifying his self-love, because he supposes him incapable of searching the consequences of himself; and a painter who marks things, and above all the expression, with too much force, causes the same effect and prejudice to beauty. Every extreme is vicious; but the greatest difficulty is to know how to choose and maintain the medium.

- are generally occasioned by the effects of violent affections.

Among the moderns no one has known how to give such taste to expression as Raphael; who appears as if he had drawn the persons themselves which he represented. Others, also of the greatest ability, appear as if they had drawn Commediants, who feign the passions they represent, and who represent the actions for the spectators, and not because they felt the effects themselves; so that it is an affectation, and not the internal sentiment of the person. Some professors of merit have shown grace only by some particular actions, and others not even this part, having made all their compositions cold, and inanimate. Raphael to the contrary is expressive in all cases, and his execution corresponds in all the parts his style requires, as I shall explain in the description of his paintings.

### NATURAL STYLE.

- Although painting ought to give an idea of things natural, I distinguish however under that term of natural style, those works in which Artists propose no other end but the same, without choosing or improving the most exquisite of nature itself, and that is understood when one speaks of Naturalists in painting; which denomination signifies that such artists have not known the art of improving their originals, or of choosing the best of Nature; contenting them-

selves only with having known how to copy it as the occasion has represented, or as they have generally found it.

It appears to me that one might compare this style of painting to the style of comic poetry, which uses the artifice of poetry, without employing poetical ideas. In this style have excellently succeeded some Dutch and Flemings, such as Rembrandt, Gerard Dau, Teniers, and others; but the best examples of that style are the works of James Velasquez; and if Titian is superior to him in colouring, the Spaniard surpassed the Venetian by much in the knowledge of light and shade, as also in aerial perspective, which are the most necessary parts in that style, because by their means it gives an idea of truth, natural objects not being able to subsist without having relief and distance between them, and may be of the most beautiful or most ordinary colouring. Whoever would wish of this kind any thing more than is to be found in the works of Velasquez, can only find it in nature itself; but he will find the most necessary parts in that author.

It will be easy to find that which corresponds with any style, when one considers, that the parts of imitation ought to be consistent with the first idea proposed by the artist; for which reason I shall pass under silence different other styles, more or less perfect, which refer to the one or the other before mentioned.

I fear I shall disgust too much a great number of Amateurs held as intelligent men, by

- speaking of the fictitious styles, admired much by him who has not a taste so delicate as to discern the true excellence of great men, and takes a mere appearance for true merit; but these are much deceived, like many other admirers of Michael Angelo who take the loaded style for the true greatness of that master.

The affectation of some Lombardian painters appear as graceful to them as that of Correggio, and the same happens of all the affected styles, which many praise, as if they were of the best taste; in the mean time it is not at the most but an augmentation of accidental things, with which they arrive to give some idea to him who is capable of knowing the objects of nature by the parts or principal signs. The means adopted by artists of that style in giving pleasure to Amateurs, is to augment the beauty of the local tints of all the bodies, and of their variety; the force and contraposition of the clear obscure, and the chimerical disposition of the masses of light and shade where one cannot find it natural; so that such works are executed more for the eye than the reason. Many have practiced this style who are held as great men, particularly out of Italy, whose names I respect for their merits in other parts of the art, such as in the fertility and abundance of their genius, and in the superior talent with which they have known how to conquer and despise the greatest difficulties, and to content themselves with the value of some parts more easy, without regarding the censures of intelligent men.



## EASY STYLE.

Some professors have followed a style sufficiently easy, and of much facility, without being totally vicious; such as Peter of Cortona and his School, in which was distinguished Lucas Giordano his disciple. Those may be called painters of the easy, common, and popular styles, and who have not investigated perfection; contenting themselves to give in all the parts of the art, a sufficient idea to distinguish one thing from another, without, regarding their perfection; so that these most celebrated Artists have no other mode, of study in their works, but such as is sufficient to make themselves understood by vulgar amateurs, with very little study or application.

That which respects the practice of painting, comprehends five principal parts, which are design, clare obscure, colouring, invention, and composition. In all works occur principally and absolutely the three first; and all that which one makes in these parts one might prove if it be done well, or ill. It is not thus in the other two, which are much more arbitrary, and although they ought to be guided by reason, they avail notwithstanding something of opinions: from whence arises the difficulty of finding fixed rules to content every one; and since invention and composition regulate all the parts of choice, every one chooses differently, and approves what he has chosen according to his genius.

## DESIGN.

To enter into a description of all the parts which design requires, would be a work very long, and not proper to this place. I shall only say that its perfection, consists in the corrections; that is, in the exact imitations of all the forms and manners in which they present themselves to our sight, and in knowing how to give them their correspondent character; choosing from nature that which agrees with the subject and object.

## CLARE OBSCURE.

The Beauty of Clare obscure consists in knowing how to imitate all the effects of light and shade in nature, and in giving to works, force, sweetness, degradation, variety, and repose for the sight, as well in the light as shade; and finally in making the Clare obscure serve to express the character of a work somewhat cheerful or grave.

## COLOURING.

The beauty of colouring requires a just imitation of local colours,\* or of tones of colours of which any thing is tinted. This tone, ought to

\* LOCAL COLOUR, is the proper and natural colour of things which one distinguishes among them.

be the same in the lights as in the shades and half tints, so that each colour or tint goes decreasing according to its want of light, or the interposition of the air between the objects and our sight. Finally, a colour ought to receive all the accidents which one sees in nature, so as to produce a beautiful, lucid, rich, powerful, and soft colouring.

### INVENTION.

Invention is the most exact part of painting, and the most natural to explain the talent of an artist. It is the poetry of painting. It is the first idea of a work, and the painter ought never to lose sight of it even in the last stroke of the pencil. It is not sufficient that he forms good ideas, and that he fills a large canvass with many figures, if all these serve not to explain the principal object, and if all the complexion of the work does not express and declare to spectators the subject of which one treats, preparing and disposing the understanding of him who views the painting, by being mixed with the expressions and particular actions of the principal figures; without which it would avail nothing to give violent expressions and altered motions like those who wish to appear inventors. Excess is the thing most contrary to good invention. To give an idea of that part, I shall describe among a few, the painting of the SPASSIMO DI SICILIA, when I treat of the Paintings of the Royal Palace.

# COMPOSITION.

By composition in painting, one ought to understand the art of uniting with a good method, the objects which are chosen by means of invention. These two parts ought always to be united : because the best thoughts, and the most beautiful inventions would be disagreeable without good composition. The beauty of that part depends principally upon the variety, contraposition, contrast,\* and on the disposition of all the component parts of a work. With all that, invention has to regulate all the parts of the composition, to assign the quantity more or less which ought to enter into the painting, and the motive, or property of that which composes it.

Painting has been subject to changes, which all human things suffer ; it has had its progress and decay ; it returns to elevate itself to a certain degree, and then goes declining anew. It has not only experienced these changes, but has varied also in its fundamental reasons ; because that which in one time has been its principal end, in another has been regarded as a part scarcely necessary.

CONTRAST in painting, means a well distributed variety of all the parts. It is the contrary to repetition. If in a group of three figures, for example, one shows itself by the front, another by the back, and the other by the side, they will have good contrast. Each figure, and each member ought to contrast with others of its group, and each group with others in the painting. There is contrast even in colours.

I give for supposition, that in no nation had painting existed, in a form of the art, before that of Greece, and that no others had exalted it to so high a degree of perfection as them. These genius's cultivated it with other reasons, and with a style different from the moderns, although the imitation of nature has been always the principal end of all.

The ancients regarded beauty so much, that only the beautiful part of nature appeared to them worthy of imitation; so that one may be assured it has been those who have formed and maintained the style of beauty. The vast attention which the greatest artists paid to the perfection of that part, was retained in the thoughts of those grand compositions of which the modern authors are so proud. In fact, the most celebrated paintings of Polignotus, Zeuxis, Parrasius, and Apelles were of few figures.

Their inventions, although ingenious, were not abundant in objects, and from those which remain, we may conjecture, that their most copious compositions explained more the particular excellence of each figure, than the unity of the whole. One may yet adduce another reason by which the ancient painters filled not their paintings full of figures; which is, that a beautiful and perfect object requires space to show itself to advantage, it being certain that many objects weaken the enjoyment of the principal perfection.

When the Grecian painters advanced their art so much as to merit the attention of philoso-

phers, they aimed to seek excellence in the imitation of nature; but of perfect nature; from whence they did not exact so much a number of objects, as their perfection. In this manner they advanced the art by degrees from the fifteenth Olympiad to the nineteenth, in which time they found the greatest subtilty, nor remained any thing to add except that grace, which, as I have said, is not naturally perfection, or beauty, but gives the idea of the last, by representing it to the mind in that state of repose\* which facilitates the comprehension of him who views it. This part was reserved for the great Apelles, who flourished in the 112th Olympiad. He bestowed on the art all its completion, perfecting all that which his predecessors had invented; and all those who came after him, wishing to proceed otherwise, fell into useless novelty, minutia, brilliancy of colours and caprices.

When painting returned almost to its first being in the 14th century, the world was found in great ignorance, and with little philosophy, so that the first painters were employed to paint images without having any regard to beauty or perfection.

\*. The sight finds quiet and REPOSE in a work when there is no confusion in it, and when the colours and are obscure are well understood, and gradated in a manner that the eyes and the understanding can comprehend the idea of the painter with ease, and without fatigue. A painting where the author exhausts all his subject, and loads it too much with objects, or where by studying variety, he has ill understood the collocation of the colours, will cause an effect contrary to that repose of which we speak. The *Logge*, improperly called of RAPHAEL, is a good example of confusion, because there is too much of every thing in it.

In Italy, where it was principally renewed, they painted entire façades for churches, chapels, and church-yards, representing mysteries of the passion of Our Lord, and of other similar things; from whence, even from the beginning, the art inclined to a state of abundance and superfluity, rather than perfection; and even till now the system is not changed, as painting serves to content the vulgarity of riches and power, more than philosophy and good taste; quite the contrary to that which happened among the Grecians. Thus it follows, that painters seek not perfection, but abundance and facility, because perfection is but for few, and the rest is attainable to all, even to the most ignorant, who at present are the legislators of taste.

Since nothing in this world is constant, and men are extravagant in their ideas, by exalting that which is low, and abasing that which is high, painters could not do less than seek new modes to surpass one another, and, by that, they have proceeded by adding some theoretical parts, to that barbarous practice in which they began.

The first part they found was perspective, by the knowledge of which, and that of foreshortning, they put themselves in a state to advance more their inventions.

Domenico Ghirlandajo, of Florence, was the first, who, by means of that part, improved the mode of composition, and placing the figures in groups, and distinguishing the drapery by just gradations, he gave profundity to his com-

positions. In spite of all that, he did not dare dilate his compositions as his successors have practised.

Towards the end of the 14th century were born some men of superior talents, such as Leonardo da Vinci, Michael Angelo, Giorgione, Titian, Father Bartholomy of saint Mark, and Raphael. Leonard found much subtilty; Michael Angelo with the study of the ancient fragments, and with the knowledge of anatomy enlarged the style of design, with the forms. Giorgione of Castlefranco enlarged it also in general, and in particular gave to colouring the greatest vivacity, which his predecessors had not done. Titian with a more subtle imitation of nature, found perfection in the tones of colouring. Father Bartholomy, making drapery his particular study, found the mode of dressing well the figures, following the relief of the naked by means of clare obscure. Raphael, endowed with a more natural, and determinate talent for painting, studied his predecessors and contemporaries, and appropriating the most excellent of all, according to the convenience of expressing the truth of nature, he formed a style the most perfect and universal of all the modern painters who have been before or after him; and if he were excellent in all the parts of the art, he was incomparably more so in composition and invention; and I believe it would have surprised the Grecians themselves if they had seen the great works of the Vatican, where unite abundance,



and so much perfection, with study, elegance and ease.

As among the Grecians painting had acquired the highest perfection by means of Zeuxis, and Parafius, and that the great Apelles, as I have said, had only to add grace, apparently, also, among the moderns, nothing was deficient in painting after Raphael, except that Grace which Anthony Allegri added, who accomplished all that which the style of modern painting could desire; surprising the understanding of the intelligent, and the sight of every one.

After these great painters there was an interval, until the Caracci's of Bologna, studying the works of their predecessors, and principally those of Correggio, formed a new School, and became the first, and most happy among the Imitators. Hannibal was the most correct imitator, and reunited the style of the ancient statues with the grandeur of Lewis, but he despised the subtilty of the art, and philosophical reflections. From these Caracci's, was formed a school of many able men, and all followed the same track, except Guido Reni, who had a great talent and much ease, and introduced in painting a pleasing style, composed of beauty, grace, richness and ease. Guercino of Cento, was inventor of another particular style of clare obscure, which was composed of spots, contraposition, variety, and of interruptions of all the clare obscure.

After these great men, who imitated with much ease the appearance of the perfection of the first, and of nature, came Peter of Cortona who

found yet too much difficulty to accomodate himself to these styles, and possessing a great natural talent, he applied himself principally to the part of composition, and to that which is called TASTE. Until this time, all compositions had had a kind of symmetry, or be it disposition, regulated according as the equilibrium, and invention of the history required; but Peter of Cortona almost separated the invention of the composition, valuing much more of those parts which delight the sight; as are the contrapositions and contrasts of the members of the figures, so that then was introduced the custom of filling paintings with a croud of figures, well distributed, without thinking whether they suited the history or not; which is diametrically opposite to the practice of the ancient Greeks, who used to employ few figures, in order that their perfection might be more visible: those of the school of Cortona, to the contrary, used many figures in order that their imperfections should not be so palpable. . Of this last school, there are very many of the same sentiments, which have changed the character of painting.

A little after came Carlo Maratti, who, aspiring to perfection, sought it in the works of other painters and particularly in those of the Caracci's. Although he applied all his study to be natural, one knows by himself that he was in the preoccupation of not following his own simplicity. This maxim he extended to all the parts of the art; and, with that, has given to his school, (which has been the last

at Rome,) a certain style of nicety and affectation.

France also has had some great men, particularly in composition, in which Nicholas Poussin was, after Raphael, him who most imitated the style of the ancient Greeks. Charles le Brun was abundant: different other Frenchmen were men of merit; and whilst their school did not depart from the Italian maxims, it produced many good professors, who remained famous in many parts of the art; but there soon appeared some, who, preferring the magnificent works of Rubens which were existing at Paris, to the perfect works of Raphael, imitated in part the pleasing objects which nature offered in France, with the maxims of Rubens, and they formed a style which pleases for novelty and brilliancy, to which that nation is inclined, and abandoned the Italian taste, forming a national style, in which, what they call *ESPRIT* makes the essential part. From that time they no longer painted either Egyptians, Greeks, Romans, or Barbarians as Poussin had done, but always Frenchmen; and thus they pretended to express by them the characters of any other nations.

That which I have thought of the other schools you may draw from the description which I shall give of the works of their best artists.

Although the little I have said will not be sufficient to give a compleat idea of the art, yet I fear that to you it will appear too long for the short description which I shall give of the paintings of his Majesty.:

I would wish that in that Royal Palace could be found the account of all the other valuable paintings which are in the other Royal seats, and that they were disposed in a gallery, worthy of so great a monarch, to be able well or ill to form a discourse that from the most ancient painters which we have any account of, one might guide the understanding of the curious even to the last who have merited any praise: I could then make comprehensible the essential difference which passes between them, and I could give by that more clearness to the ideas; but the court not having ever thought of forming a series of painting, I shall speak unconnectedly of the artists of different times, beginning by the best Spanish authors, whose works are placed in the principal rooms of that Royal Palace.

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DESCRIPTION  
OF THE  
PRINCIPAL PAINTINGS  
OF THE  
ROYAL PALACE

AT  
MADRID.

**I**N the hall where the King dresses, are placed the major part of the said paintings; particularly of the three authors, James Velasquez, Ribera, and Morillo. But what difference between them! what knowledge and truth of clear obscure do we not find in Velasquez! how well he understood the effect which the air has when interposed between the objects, to make appear distant the one from the other! and what study for any professor who would wish to consider the paintings of that author existing in

the said hall, (executed at three different times,) and the manner which shows the way held by him, to arrive to such excellence in the imitation of nature! The painting of the AGUADOR of Seville, shows, how much painters subjected themselves in the beginning to natural imitation; by finishing all the parts, and giving them that force which appears as if one saw the model, considering the essential difference which there is between the parts illuminated, and shade, so that that same imitation of the natural style made them give into that which was a little harsh and dry.

In the painting of the false Bacchus, who crowns some drunkards, one sees a style more open and free, because it imitates truth, not as it is, but as it appears. Yet one observes a great ease and dexterity in the forge of Vulcan, where some of the smiths are a perfect imitation of nature. But where, without doubt, he gave a just idea of the same nature, is, in the painting of the Spinners, which is in his highest style, and done in a manner which appears not to have received any part from execution, but only from desire; in this style it is a singular work. Besides these paintings, there are some portraits of Velasquez of the same style, which were the most beautiful he ever did.

Ribera is admirable in the imitation of nature, in the clare obscure, in the touch of the pencil, and in shewing the accidents of the body, the wrinkles, the hair of the body, &c. His style is always powerful, but does not equal Velasquez in the knowledge of light and shade,

being deficient in the gradation and ambient air; although in the colouring he is more forcible and brilliant, as the painting of the *Sopraportes* plainly shew.

Of Morillo, there are paintings in that chamber of two different styles. The first are the *Incarnation*, and the *Nativity of Our Lord*, which, especially the second, are painted in a masterly style, and with a force conformable to nature, although they were done before he acquired that sweetness which characterises his second style, as one discovers in other paintings of that chamber, and namely in the little one of the marriage of the Virgin Mary, and in a most beautiful half figure of Saint James, placed in a contiguous anti-chamber.

In the conversation room of the King, there is an excellent work of Velasquez which represents the Infanta Donna Margarita Maria of Austria, when the aforesaid Velasquez drew her, but that work being so famous for its excellence, I will not say more than that it can convince that the effect occasioned by the imitation of nature, is that which serves to content every class of people, above all, where one makes not the principal account of beauty.

For the present, I will refrain from speaking of the many excellent paintings of Titian, dispersed through every part of the palace, to say something of the superb portrait of Velasquez, in which he represented Philip IV. on horseback, in an admirable style, as well for the figure of the King, as the horse, and the field itself, is

touched\* with the greatest taste, but above all is singular the easy and determinate style with which the head of the king is painted, and which seems to brighten the skin; and all, even to the hair, which is most beautiful, is executed with the greatest legerity. By the side of that painting is another of the Count Duke of Olivarez scarce any thing inferior to that of the King aforesaid.

We now proceed to observe the most beautiful painting of the same author, representing the Surrender of a Fort, which painting was originally placed in the RETIRO of the chamber of kingdoms, and is now in the chamber where the Prince of Asturias dines. This painting contains all the perfection of which the subject was capable, nor is there a thing, except the spear and the lance, which is not expressed with the greatest majesty. In the same chamber is the portrait of the Infanta Donna Margarita Maria, and that of an Infant on horseback, both executed by Velasquez in his best style, with other portraits from his hand, which likewise here placed.

In the dressing chamber of the Prince, are

\* Touch in terms of painting, signifies the managing the pencil and colours. Every object one supposes to see at a certain distance, of course ought to lose the minutiae which one sees when near. The hair, for example, one cannot see or represent divided as it is, and for that reason painters represent it in a mass. This mass is to be done in a certain manner which depends upon its style and election. From whence we say that a painter touches in such, or such a style. In short this distinguishes the powerful soft, easy, delicate, grand touch, &c.



three beautiful paintings of Ribera, one of Saint Jerom, and a fellow of Saint Benedict, painted in his most clear style, in which one sees the most beautiful touches of the pencil, the most exact imitation of nature, and of an expression not general in the face of Saint Benedict. The other, representing the Martyrdom of a Saint, is also excellent, although of a style more powerful.

It would be superfluous to speak of all the paintings of Rubens, and his school, which are in so great a number in that palace. One, however, is remarkable, which represents the adoration of Kings; a work truly of the first class among those of that author. He painted it in Flanders, after his best style, and when he came to Spain, he added more canvass, in order to make the painting larger, and to augment the figures, among which he did his own portrait. This painting has all the beauty of which its author was capable in historical subjects, and the design has fewer retouches than the others.

Among the different paintings of Vandyke, there is one very beautiful, which represents Christ in the Garden, painted with great taste, and good colouring, as far as the subject permitted it in a scene by night. The portrait, of half figure, of the Cardinal Infant, is likewise excellent for its truth and colouring; and for being of a touch the most easy, soft, and limpid.

The paintings of Lucas Giordano are almost infinite, and one might say that he has never made a thing absolutely bad, because one

always finds in his works a certain taste, but after the manner of an embryo of the excellent things done by celebrated men in the schools of Italy. He never arrived to perfection in any thing; from whence it arises that his style has not been able to suffer any diminution without falling into the most ordinary style of painting; it was formed in that degree which he wished to follow. The works of Lucas Giordano, are, generally speaking, of two kinds, although he made them various by imitating one and another particular painter. Some of his paintings are of a powerful colour, imitating something Ribera, of whom he learnt the profession in his first years, but his more general style, and most natural to his character, which one observes in his best works, is that which he took from Peter of Cortona. After this style is the superb work in fresco of the *CASONE DEL RITIRO*, and many other paintings in the palace; but in other works which he did at Madrid, he fell off something from that style, by mixing dressed figures in his works, after the manner of Paolo Veronese, and, painting with more feeble tints, and much clear obscure, with that he formed a style more heavy, as one may see in some Histories of Solomon, which are in that Palace, done after he painted the work of the Escorial.

Among other paintings of the same Palace, there is one of a Madonna of half figure, with the child and Saint John, which to some appears of Raphaël: in fact the child is almost all taken from that author; the flesh of the figures is rather red; the field and the country incline to blue; the robe

of the madonna is of a carmine colour, rather clear, and the mantle is of a dark blue; all things characteristic of Raphael; and by that, he, who does not know the essential beauty of that author, may be deceived by the imitation of Giordano. Other paintings of his in the same palace, imitate the Venetian style; not however to that perfection which some suppose.

One might reckon as works of great consideration some paintings of Tintoretto, of the Old Palma, and of James of Bassano, but all, in my opinion, are eclipsed by that of Paolo Veronese, and more especially by some of Titian of his best style; great painters, who were never surpassed, nor even equalled by any in the knowledge and perfection of colouring. There is such an excellence in their works in this part of painting, that in no manner can one discover their artifice; the whole appearing as pure and native truth. Titian was wonderfully easy in the touch of the pencil, nor ever negligent; even his touches are well designed. The effect and the force of the clare obscure in his paintings, does not consist on the obscurity of the shade, or in the clearness of the lights, but in the disposal of the local colours.

All the aforesaid qualities one may see executed in the most beautiful Bacchanal, whose figures are a third part of the size of nature. This painting is at present preserved in the chamber of the Princess. Each part in particular, and the whole together, are so beautiful, that it would require a length of time to de-

scribe them. I can only say that I never pass before that painting, without remaining astonished with admiration at that sleeping female placed in the first stage, occasioning in me as much novelty as if I had never seen it before. The colouring of that figure is the most clear that Titian ever used; the degradation of the tints is so wonderful, that I have never seen a thing of the kind so beautiful in the world; nor does one distinguish them but by comparing with great attention the one with the others, each singly appears as living flesh, and the infinite variety of the whole is subject to the idea of one tone only. In each of the figures, the local tints of the flesh is varied with the greatest propriety, and even the drapery is beautiful of colours. Passing to the accessory parts, the sky with clear clouds, the green trees of various shades, the fields covered with herbs, and the whole together have vivacity without ever departing from the perfect imitation of nature.

The painting, almost of the same size, which represents a feast of a great number of children at play with fruits, which they had gathered from the trees, is also of the greatest beauty, of a very finished style, and appears done almost at the same time of the other. It is wonderful to see so much diversity in the infants, and in their hair which is almost all black and curled, but above all is the great artifice of the degradation of the tints, and the finish which loses itself by little and little in the more distant objects.

These two paintings were in Rome in the

house of Lodovisi, and were made a present of to the king of Spain. The same according to Sandrart served as a study to learn how to make the beautiful children of Dominichino, Poussin, and of the Fleming. Albano availed himself of it in his painting of a little group of these children, who are dancing. In the Palace are two copies which Rubens did of that painting, but one might consider them as a book translated into the Flemish language, which preserves all the thoughts, but loses all the grace of the original.

There are many other paintings of the same Titian, all however done afterwards, and some in his old age, when, from decayed sight he neglected the clearness of his pencil, yet always preserving the excellence of the tints. Notwithstanding, it has caused much injury to painting that Titian has left so many works of this class executed with negligence; because many painters have imitated that mode without recollecting that Titian had known how to paint more finished, and made first a great study in all the beautiful principles and fundamentals of the art, although he was superior in colouring, in which he surpassed every one.

There are but few paintings which we can enumerate of Correggio, but every thing painted by that great man has all the enchantment of the art. Although there are only two of them there, they are enough to give a sufficient idea of the greatness of that artist. The Madonna who dresses the Child, with Saint

Joseph at a distance, appear done after the manner of a sketch, by the many essential variations which one discovers done by the author in the postures of the Child and the Madonna. It is surprising that a minor figure of two palms should have such effect at any considerable distance, appearing that it exceeds its measure; this however does not arise, so much from the force of the clare obscure, as from the imperceptible half-tints, which pass from the light to the shade and from the singular artifice of treating one with the other, with which they express in such a manner the relief and the form that it gives almost a contradiction to its being a plain surface.

If Titian was singular in the tints and local colouring of any thing he represented, Correggio, although less perfect in that part, surpassed him infinitely in particular relief, in the ENTRATE AND USCITE of each body and of its parts, as also in the artifice of aerial perspective not only regarding the objects diminished, by clare or obscure in the interposed distance, but also by certain knowledge of the nature of the air, which being matter, more or less transparent, is filled with light, and passing through the bodies communicates it to the same in those parts where the rays of light could not pass direct, and thus formed that ambience which distinguishes objects even in the shade, and makes one comprehend the distance which there is between the one and the other. This part was perfectly understood

by the ancient Greeks, as one may observe in the paintings of Herculaneum, even in the most ordinary; from whence one knows it to have been at that time a precept of the school. Among the moderns, the most celebrated in that point were Correggio, Velasquez, and Rembrant.

Returning to our painting, the Child is a most perfect thing, not only from the knowledge of the clear obscure, but also for the colouring, impasting, design, and the highest grace. Correggio intended to produce wonders in the foreshortening, and to make it that these contours should arise in the same form of the body; a thing extremely difficult, and executed only in an equal degree by Michael Angelo, and Raphael. The Grecians considered this as the most difficult part of Painting, as Pliny refers in Lib. xxxv. Cap. 10. speaking of Parrhasius in these terms; “Because to paint bodies, and that which is within them, although it is certainly a great thing, yet many have succeeded in it; but to make the contours, and terminate the things which they comprehend, is a merit which few painters have had; because the last lines ought to be made in a manner that they appear to embrace and enfold things, showing the tendency of them, and that they extend further than the eye can distinguish.”

The other painting, which represents the Prayer of our Lord in the Garden, is also small, but a compleat and studied work. At first sight, one distinguishes only Christ with the Angels,

by the air of their brightness, all the rest remaining in nocturnal shade; then considering it well, one finds divinely expressed the ambient, and the degradations which natural objects make when seen by little light; so that we know the near objects, whilst the distant ones are not discoverable to our sight. One scarcely distinguishes the men who are going to seize our Lord, nor is there a touch, or sensible stroke of the pencil in the trees, until where the apostles are; but according as one advances the things more to the light, one begins to distinguish the foliage, herbs, a trunk with the crown of thorns, and the cross on the ground.

The splendor of the face of Christ, illuminates all the painting; but the same Saviour receives the light from above, as if from Heaven, reflecting it to the angels, who receive it from him. This idea, which is very natural and beautiful, is executed with that perfection of which its author only was capable. At present these paintings are in the same cabinet of the Princess, where are also the aforesaid of Titian. Here are also some things of Leonardo da Vinci. Of his best style is one painting which represents two children playing with a lamb, not very well executed, and another which carries the sole head of the young saint John. In these paintings, one sees the great study which the author makes upon light and shade, that is, upon that degradation which there is from the greatest light to the greatest obscurity, observing also certain



graceful, and laughing gestures, which appear to have opened the way to Correggio to arrive to that grace which one sees in his works.\*

One finds also in this cabinet some paintings supposed to be of Raphael. Of his invention there is a Holy family with figures half the size of nature, and it appears done from his design by one of his first Disciples. There is another little painting of Madonna of half figure, with the child, of the same composition of the famous painting at Florence, known under the name of MADONNA DELLA SEGGIOLA, with the difference that in the one of which we speak, does not appear St. John, and it is of a square form, in the mean time the other is rotund, with figures almost as large as nature. This little painting of the Palace appears to have been in part repainted by the same Raphael, but more after the mode of a sketch than a finished work. The head of Madonna in particular, is all his, and is full of life and expression; it is, finally, equal to any other of his best works.

But how shall I explain myself sufficiently and in a manner most worthy of the beautiful painting known by the name of the SPASIMO DI SICILIA? you know that Raphael painted it at Rome to send it to Sicily, to be placed in the Church of MADONNA DELLO SPASIMO. This work, according to Vasari, was lost in the sea, but was recovered without receiving any damage.

\* Among the paintings which passed from Modena to the Gallery of Dresden, there is one of Correggio, which represents the Madonna, whose head is very similar to the style of Leonard.

In all ages it has been much admired by truly intelligent men: Agostino of Venice engraved it, however without giving an idea of its beauty. The Count Malvasia speaks of it in dispraise; but his same writings shows him of little judgment in the excellence of paintings, and he confides in the relation of some painters, perhaps those, who by their great inferiority to Raphael, could not discern the merits of that great man, nor the true reasons for which they ought to value the works of famous artists.

It appears to me indubitable, that the part most noble in painting is not that which solely delights the sight, and renders a work pleasing to men who are in fact ignorant of this art, but that those parts are the most valuable which satisfy the understanding, and content those who know how to make use of the faculties of the mind. It being thus, (of which I am persuaded) Raphael is without doubt the greatest painter among all those whose works have been preserved to our time. The inventions and conceptions of his paintings, give at first sight an idea of that which he would make comprehensible to the understanding of those who view them. By that, his subjects are tranquil, tumultuous, ferocious, or amiable, cheerful or melancholy; not containing any thing contrary to that idea, and give the perfect signification of the subjects; by which means he moves our intellects, and acquire above all, power, and authority, like Poetry and Oratory.

— Besides this, in each of his figures one feels

expressly that which he did before that act; and one almost comprehends that which he precisely ought to do after. We see none of the actions entirely compleat; on the contrary, all are in action, a little after it is begun, or a little before it is finished; and it is that which gives them such life, that to look at them attentively, they appear moving. In fact, if we wish to examine the present painting in all the aforesaid parts, we shall know, that if Raphael had not been always so great in his time, one might say, this would be singular for its great beauty.

You already know that the subject of this painting is taken from Scripture, when, carrying Jesus Christ the Cross to mount Calva; the women in seeing it, burst into tears, and he, as a Prophet, tells them not to weep for him, but for their children; thus announcing the destruction of Jerusalem. Raphael, to make more comprehensible this painting, shows, at a distance, Mount Calva, which one ascends by a winding path, that turns to the right hand out of the door, whence it is supposed our Lord fell at the first turn of the same road, from which side he is drawn by a Russian with a cord with which he tied him.

It is supposed that this painting having been done for the Church of MADONNA DEL DOLOR, the patrons wished that the painter would introduce Madonna in it; although it is also possible that the idea was his own: However it might be, Raphael knew on all occasions how to find a mode the most noble, decorous, and

expressive, to represent whatever may be the subject.

Wishing to figure in that printing the mother of a person who was conducted to the place of execution, and treated without compassion by the ministers, he chose the most unhappy state of another, who, to assist her son, is necessitated to supplicate the infamous crowd to have pity upon him. In that state Raphael painted the Madonna, who being on her knees, does not see her son, and who of herself could give him no succour, but in the act of the most efficacious supplication manifests, that having fallen to the ground he has occasion of the commiseration of some one to raise him up. To this expression of humility in the Virgin, the painter gave nobleness, by painting at her side the Magdalen, saint John, and the other Marias, who accompany her and succour her, supporting her under the arm.

These persons are represented full of grief for the sufferings of our Lord; particularly the Magdalen, who appears almost as if she were speaking to Jesus. Saint John is succouring the Virgin Mary. One sees Jesus Christ fallen; not weak however or worn down; but in the act of naming with his words, as the Evangelist relates; and his aspect besides being in that painting of a beauty and excellence almost incomprehensible, manifests itself as inflamed with a prophetic spirit, which corresponds exactly with the divine person it represents, who is always divine although in sufferings; It is admirable also for the propriety of Raphael, who never

meanly expressed any thing, when its character could, or should be represented with nobility. The action of all the figure is animated and noble: The left arm, which with his beautiful hand rests upon a stone, is all spread; but in the folds of the large sleeve he manifested a momentaneous act, appearing as if they were yet in air, and had not finished their fall according to the inclination of their weight. With the right hand, our Saviour embraces the cross which is fallen upon him, nor does he wish it should be taken away; on the contrary, he appears in the act of embracing it: a thought most worthy of the imagination of Raphael, who even in an action, which to many would appear indifferent, remembers that Jesus suffered because it was his will.

He is not less admirable in the variety of the characters, which he knew how to express in the executioners; showing that among the bad one meets with worse. This figure, with his back turned, draws Jesus Christ with a cord, and appears not to have had any other object but the brutal desire of arriving with the sufferer to the place of execution. The other, who sustains in some manner the cross, appears as if moved by a certain compassion, and that he would wish to raise up Jesus Christ. At the side, is a Soldier who throws the cross upon the shoulders of Christ, and raising the lance in the act of threatening him, expresses the greatest iniquity in wishing even now to oppress our Lord already fallen.

All these reflections only tend properly to

invention, which in truth is that which makes noble the art of painting, and discovers the force of the understanding of the artist, who, when he arrives to that part of the excellence which Raphael obtained, merits the title of a great man, like great Poets and great Orators. It is necessary however to remark, that perfect invention does not consist only in a beautiful conception, or in a charming thought, but in that unity of progressive ideas which first fills and occupies the intellect of the professor, and then that of the spectators; and he ought to maintain the same ideas from the first disposition of the whole, even to the last stroke of the pencil, forming one only thing in the end of the work.

Many other artists, who, to common amateurs and vulgar painters appear inventors, have at least been entirely ignorant of the aforesaid parts possessed by the great Raphael, confounding, at every instant, invention with composition. Invention is the true poetry of painting, already formed in the mind of the painter, who then represents it as if he had seen it, or that the action he represents had happened before his eyes.

Composition, to the contrary, consists in the co-ordination of all the objects which enter in the aforesaid invention. By the equivocation introduced into the schools of painters, and the heads of amateurs, arises the belief that paintings are invented and composed only to please the sight by a diversity of objects, with various directions and contrapositions, forgetting

the part most noble, which is the signification appertaining to invention.

Some ignorant people have dared to say that Raphael was not a composer, because they met but with the few images of the Madonna, and had never seen the magnificent works of the Vatican, nor those of the acts of the Apostles, invented by him for a work of tapestry, which even in Madrid one can see and contemplate in the complete collection of the Duke of Alba. When, however, one could not observe these, nor the prints of Raphael, the sole painting of which we speak could convince any one of his eminent quality in this part. In fact, who knew better than him how to equilibrate \* the compositions, to pyramid † the groups, and to give the contrast of an alternative motion to the members of the figures, with infinite variety of directions, so that all the parts of the divine work appear to be living? And who understood better the just quality of the figures which are suitable to a history, and to dispose of them in a manner that none rest idle or useless? If he used only moderation, and rarely certain violent motions, it was to subject every thing to expression, and to paint the state

\* To EQUILIBRATE a composition means, that the objects ought to be distributed in a manner that they do not leave one part of the painting void, and the other full, and that this distribution appears natural, and never affected.

† To PYRAMID the groups, is to make the objects together form a pyramid, that is, that it has a greater base than point. And that in any other form but that in which they are disposed, be it straight or circular, they will have a frightful effect.

of mind of the person he represented, it being very inconsistent that a thoughtful man should have the same action of one who is fighting, running, or walking. So that the noble and the plebian, age and youth, and every diversity of state, natural and accidental, ought to be distinguished in a good composition as Raphael has done; that being a part of invention.

Design is the most efficacious instrument which the painter has to explain the conceptions of his mind, and is also most beautiful in this painting, as in all the other works of Raphael: and if he in that did not arrive to the whole beauty of the Grecian statues, it was by reason of the customs of his time being so different from that of the Grecians, as also the occasions, and objects so different in which he exercised his talent.

If, however, the ancients had been under the necessity of designing an Executioner by the side of a Christ, certainly they would not have done it better, nor in any other mode than that which one sees him with his back turned, in this painting. If the proportion of his stature required a man rough, and brutal, it would have been very improper to substitute in his place an elegant figure, like the Gladiator of Bernese, which claims to itself the attention more of Christ himself, as happens in the famous work of Domenechino in the chapel of St. Andrew, in the church of St. Gregory, at Rome, where all admire more the executioner, who stabs the saint, than the figure of the saint himself, who ought



to have been the principal, and the hero of the history. The same defect has reigned, and still reigns in almost all the paintings of the famous painters who flourished from the beginning of the past age. Notwithstanding, whoever would wish to see in the Ancients an example of character not always beautiful, should observe the Grinder of Florence, and he certainly will not see in that figure the character of the Wrestlers, the Silenus, and of the excellent Gladiator.

He who knows how to consider the style of design of Raphaël in that as well as in his other works, will find the same spirit of the ancients; that is, in having known how to comprehend and mark with precision and clearness, all the most essential parts of the construction of the human body, leaving almost invisible the things superfluous and insignificant. But that which above all occasions astonishment in the design of Raphael is, that the character, of the person painted, corresponds so with the actions he represents, that effectively it appears as if one saw a man; who, not by chance, but by natural inclination did that in which Raphael represented him, and this one does not only observe in the countenance, from which one is used to know the mind of man, but also in the form of all the body, and its parts.

In a figure, whose back one sees, he represented a man robust and rough, as are often idiots, and he gave him a proportionable action without expressing the particular intention. To the contrary, in the two afore-

said, he expressed the mind in the faces, as a proportion more elegant than in the bodies. One observes, especially in the Christ, the most beautiful countenance, with expression the most lively, without altering in the least part the regularity or nobleness of its physiognomy. Also all the principal parts of the bones and muscles are marked there, but do not injure the greatness of the principal forms. This character one observes also in the neck, and hand on which he leans; and though this action of leaning presses the flesh in a manner which almost hides the bones, and the joints, that, nevertheless, gives such contour to the thumb, and to the other fingers, and so corresponds to the character of the head, as if it were executed by the most able Grecian artists, who had wished to make a figure of a character between that of Jove and Apollo; which effectively ought to be that which corresponds with Christ, adding only the accidental expression of the passions in which he is represented.

I will not be diffuse in saying, how excellent is every little stroke of the pencil in the knowledge of foreshortening, and the outlines, which are hid one within the other, according to the point of view, so that it appears to him who considers well that work, that in many places the sight can penetrate within the surface. The turns of all the parts of the head according to the action and point of view, is executed as Raphael was accustomed. But it would be too long to speak of every little observation, and

every merit that one meets with in that excellent man; and in general one ought to be persuaded, that whenever in his works one finds any part executed with less excellence, one should attribute it to some of his disciples, and that he could not do more than retouch them on account of the many commissions which he had in his best time, and in consequence, one ought not to consider these parts as his.

After having seen and examined the most precious painting (for what regards the most noble part of the art) that is preserved in the Royal Palace, and which contains in a most sublime degree, the first considerations of painting, we shall proceed to see paintings in a style more easy, in which is abridged all difficulty. I shall speak of them, however, only in general.

The first works which offer are of Lanfranco, among which the funeral of an Emperor, with a combat of Gladiators is excellent. That work contains in itself only one appearance of things most excellent in the art. In the design, there is something of that general idea of the construction of the human body in which consists the beauty of the ancients. It has part of the expression of Raphael, as also of the mass and easy clear obscure of Correggio: this however is not executed entirely, but only indicated. There is a combat of boats, a sacrifice, and other paintings of that author which are also beautiful.

There are here very many other paintings,

of various schools; but do not arrive to that excellence which is before mentioned. One of these is with some of Poussin, and among these, a celestial sufficiently beautiful, whose figures are a little less than a foot in height. This is a work well finished, of very good design and colouring, with some very graceful women and children, who are dancing. The country which forms the field of the painting is as beautiful as one could wish. This painting, destined for the cover of a harpsichord, was afterwards enlarged by the same Poussin, or by Gaspar his brother-in-law.

It would be a desirable thing that many young painters would study with application these beautiful examples of the arts which I have heretofore described, not only in copying them, but in imitating them; two things very different, because all those who copy a work of painting, are not by that made able to produce similar things, if they do not apply themselves, and purpose to follow the reasons of the author of the original. This is the only means of drawing profit from the study of the things of others. Therefore, in all paintings, one finds two essential parts: one comprehends the reasons of things, which we may call the trace left by the understanding of the artist; the other is the style of the work; that is, the habit of the execution of the author. Generally, those who copy and pretend to study the works of great men, apply the principal care to imitate that appearance which I have called *MODE*:

and from whence it arises, that the original being taken away, and see themselves in a necessity to copy a work in which occur other things and circumstances different from that which they have copied, they find themselves without a guide. But he who effectively studies and observes the productions of great men with the true desire of imitating them, makes himself capable of producing works which resemble them; because he considers the reasons with which they are done; and in that manner, comprehending them, can adapt them to all things where they are suitable, and thus it makes him an imitator without being a plagiarist.

From what I have said, I conclude that the beginners of painting ought to apply themselves to study well the works of great men, not however only to imitate them blindly, but to the end of finding out which are the parts of nature they have chosen to imitate, persuading themselves that nothing is good in their works if it be not conformable to nature. After having acquired a certain practice in copying the said works, they ought to study the same in nature, and to observe what parts most resemble the choice of the masters whose works they study to copy. In that manner one will be enabled to follow whatsoever natural inclination one may have, and even although one does not arrive to equal the masters one proposes to imitate, following nature, one shall not fail of acquiring sufficient merit and honor in the art; because nature is so abundant and various in her productions that she

offers to all talents parts proportioned to their capacity; and it is sufficient, to imitate with the reasons I have endeavoured to deliver, as well as I am able, and as my little practice of writing and the quality of this little work, will permit me, which finally is only a letter written with good will, and with little leisure to reduce it to the best form, which unites with my confined abilities to render it more imperfect. From whence I intreat you to exculpate me with the public, and to supply with some explanations the obscurity of my mode of expressing myself; because to give greater clearness to my ideas I should have occasion to extend them, and to write a book of precepts; a thing which on no account I would dare to undertake.

I humbly offer you this little which my occupations have permitted me, and in that which would be more useful than words and writings, command him who owes you every, esteem and is, desirous to serve you.

ARANJUEZ. 4th March 1776.



LETTER,

FROM

ANTHONY RAPHAËL MENGE,

TO A FRIEND.

UPON THE

RISE, PROGRESS, AND DECAY,

OF THE

ART OF DESIGNING.





## LETTER

OF

*ANTHONY RAPHAEL MENGES,*

UPON THE

RISE, PROGRESS, AND DECAY,

OF THE

ART OF DESIGNING.

**T**HE result of our conversations respecting the art of designing, is the request that you make me of writing my opinion upon its rise progress, and decay. Very voluntarily would I do it, by discovering to you all that which by long experience and reflection I have learnt: if I could

believe it of any utility to others; but I am restrained by two obstacles; the first is the diffidence I feel in finding I am unable to explain myself with that propriety necessary; the other is the impossibility of communicating to others a clear idea of these things without beginning by the most trivial precepts and elevating oneself gradually to the most sublime; which would employ me in a very great work, superior to my physical or mental powers. Yet, nevertheless, the will I have to oblige you, makes me set aside every obstacle in order to write something, and show you my ready obedience. I pray you however, to receive this letter as a proof of our friendship, and not as a treatise worthy to be given to the public.

The major part of human inventions are produced from necessity, except however what we call the fine arts, which are derived from the inclination a man has for imitation. The materials which are employed in these, exist in nature itself; and since she contains things which in some manner resemble one another, I believe that such resemblances have excited in men the desire of supplying and adding the parts which are deficient, or defective, to make them more alike; and by these means of comparison, they must have known how to find many things, which then they executed by the artifice of imitation.

To comprehend that which I have presently to say, it is necessary that I should explain what I mean by IDEA. By idea therefore I understand

that impression which things leave in our brain, in the meantime the same impression can return to the memory to represent the same precision. These ideas are more or less clear and distinct according to the greater or lesser intensity with which our understanding receives them, and according to its capacity of distinguishing and determining the most essential parts of things. Few are the inventions which owe not their beginning to chance; that is, to that combination which we give this name, because we are ignorant of its cause. The arts of design have apparently their origin, as I have said, from the inclination and desire of imitating things; from whence arose the PLASTICA; it being very natural that men first conceived the idea of imitating human figures, or of animals, with earth moulded together with the hands, and that then by chance, or by reflection, they baked them by the fire, to make them more hard and durable.

History shows not, with precision, the progression of this art; but it is very natural that it was thus, because we know that even after the perfection of the arts, there have still been people who used statues of baked earth; and being besides of the most remote antiquity the art of building with bricks, and giving them a certain form, and of baking them, it is very likely that in the same time came to men the idea of forming and baking figures of the same material. Some authors pretend that the Terafins or household Gods of Laban, stolen, by Racheles, were Images of

baked earth: but I do not wish to amuse myself in examining these facts of so great antiquity, in the knowledge of which, writers are so divided, and confused; and this must necessarily have happened from having all pretended to make the history of the arts exact, with the preoccupation of their having been invented in one only place, and by one only nation; which does not appear true, because man being the same in all places, and having the same necessities, passions, and caprices, of course in all times and countries he had thought, and still thinks, in the same manner, and had invented the same things.

Before I proceed I shall explain the word *Art*. I believe it is nothing more than the manner of producing any work with determinate means, and with a determinate end. The end of the Fine Arts is to delight by way of imitation, and the means are to order the imitative things in a manner that in the imitation they may have more order and clearness than the things themselves; which produces beauty, and therefore the arts which have this object are called the *FINE ARTS*. Beauty in particular, is no more than a style of being in things, which by most simple means gives us a clear idea of their good and essential qualities. Many are of an opinion that among the fine arts sculpture is the most ancient, because it is that which most simply imitates the figure of things. It was invented at different times and places, but it appears they began to introduce it by way of worship,

which is called IDOLATRY. It might be also that it had a beginning still more innocent, such as looking by means of images to conserve the memory of persons beloved, or of talents, or merit superior to others, or perhaps to signify some quality of nature, by means of figures, in order to instruct the ignorant, as we know they practised in Egypt. That nation could not perfect these arts, although they practised them there for many ages, because their religious worship opposed it, as it did not permit the artists to depart from the established form of their Idols, and because the class of Citizens who employed them were yet held as vulgar. To these reasons they united others to impede the progress of the arts, and the principal one was, that the Egyptians, as well as the Chaldeans, Arabs, and others who executed some figures, were too ignorant and unpolished to be able to produce things which were not very vulgar. It is natural to man to have a propensity and attachment for material things which fall under the senses; and for that reason other nations who came afterwards, although they were in times more enlightened, followed the first inventors, nor did they ever entirely depart from their low style. The same has happened at the revival of the arts in Europe, as I shall say in its place.

When the arts of Design were introduced into some parts of Greece, and in others were invented, they presently took the best form, as well because these people had the best instruction, as because they were of the greatest

beauty. The first is proved by not having been before Homer flourished in Greece, any sculptor or painter of reputation; and the second is attested by all Historians, and proved by experience. The works of that divine Poet shew that in his time the arts were not much advanced, because the idea which he gives of them is very poor, and he says nothing that can be comparable to the posterior works of the Greeks. He never mentions any statue of marble; and when he speaks of any productions of the arts, he adds always the richness and the ornaments; from whence I infer, that the idea which he had of their works, was that which he had taken from the Phenicians, who, by means of Commerce, disseminated them through the maritime countries.

When finally the Grecians began to cultivate design, they were already, in some Degree, a polite nation; for that reason they did not practice, like the Grecians and the other people aforesaid, vulgarly following one another, the Deceitful, copying the master; but with philosophical reasons, they sought the parts most noble, and the things most worthy to be imitated, and always adding one idea to another, they arrived to the highest degree of perfection,

One ought not to believe that the Grecians omitted the minutiae of the art on account of being ignorant of it; because we know that Dedalus, one of the most ancient sculptors in wood, was held as singular in the expression of the veins of the body, and in the fineness of

the work; but this method, originating from the mere imitation of nature, was soon abandoned by the Grecians, who considered that that which was of importance to give an idea of the human figure was the construction and form of the body, by the greatest and most essential parts. They saw that in composing a man entire, or a butt, or parts which have articulation, their actions, and movements depend on distending the members from the body, or in contracting them; from whence they inferred, that the agility and ease of the motions, depend principally that the members be not heavy, but of such a proportion as to be able to be moved by the muscles most near. The sight of, and the experience which they acquired by GYMNASTICKS, made them discover that persons of a spacious thorax were most proper for exercise and fatigue; and according to these reflections they formed their figures with the most simple contours, giving only the clear and necessary idea of each member and part of the body, without letting the minutiae appear, marking, however, with clearness, and determinately all the essential parts, and also with the most distinction those which were real; but without exceeding the limits of possibility.

In this mode they invented and established the way to a beautiful style, comprehending in their works the structure of man, and his mechanism, better than that which is in nature itself. Proceeding thus, they added always the greatest energy in their works, and dividing,



always more the general parts; they found the grace and sweetness of the art.

Perfection of beauty arose to the highest point by the hand of Phidia, in the time of Perecles, and the other parts, even to the Grace of the Arts, encreased even to the time of Alexander the Great, in which Praxiteles, and Policletus, elevated sculpture to the highest degree of perfection. But, since all human thoughts and actions always tend to progression, when the artists who succeeded them wished to join any thing to the perfection of their masters, they formed no other expedient except adding the superfluous to the essential; but the human understanding being limited, they could not combine the one with the other, and as much as they introduced of the useful, they lost in the necessary parts, and wanting thus the most important, the Art went backward in its perfection. Notwithstanding this natural course of things, the art sustained itself for a long time in Greece, and especially in Athens, because philosophy, so natural to that nation, preserved it from falling into trifling things, by leaving the greatest and important, which happened to those people who suffered themselves to be deceived and led away by the pure delight of the sight, and by that capriciousness which we call *MODE*, and which has generally no other merit than that of not having existed in the preceding day.

Finally, it caused great peril to the arts when the Romans conquered Greece, but by good fortune, the conquerors were not such barbarians

as to remain insensible of the high magnificence and beauty of the Grecian works: so that, if by the force of their arms, with a government entirely military, and with the austerity and almost fierceness of their customs they arrived to subject the Grecians, these, to the contrary, with the amenity of their genius, with the softness of their manners, and with the beauty of their works, subjected, as one may, the Romans; who, as soon as they knew Greece, confessed themselves barbarians, and conveyed their arts and artists to Italy, and employed themselves to cultivate the inventions of their captives.

We will now consider that which the same thing produces in different nations according to their principles and customs. The Romans, who were Soldiers and Orators, but not Philosophers, scarce began to abandon their rusticity and harsh manner before they fell into the relaxation of excessive luxury, and confused the idea of the beautiful with that of the rich, persuading themselves, as also now many actually do, that all that which pleases is beautiful; and on this maxim they made themselves arbiters of judging of every thing without science, and without a knowledge of the essence of things. The Romans had few artists, in proportion to the Grecians, and generally availed of these, but they did great injury to the arts by employing of slaves, and by the ignorance with which they judged of their works. Greece, in spite of its abasement, revived to a small atom

of liberty and felicity; and when finally the arts were forced to yield to the course and vicissitudes of human things, they were not lost or ruined intirely, until the invasion and oppression of that barbarous and ferocious nation which even now domineer, and tyrannise over them.

The translation of the Roman Empire to Constantinople, contributed very much to the decay of the arts in Italy, and in Greece; the last finding itself stripped of its best works, and of its best Artists and despoiled of its best ornaments to adorn the new Rome; and in Italy because they were left exposed to the invasions and conquests of Barbarians. Also concurred much to the ruin of the arts, the necessity in which were found at that time the heads of Christianity, to extirpate Idolatry, and to destroy Idols, in which indistinctly were comprehended all the most beautiful statues, condemning, and abolishing the Idols and those who made them; and that with so much fury, that it is wonderful there are remaining so many beautiful works of venerable antiquity.

Then, when they formed anew the western Empire, Idolatry was already extirpated, and Christianity established in its very vast provinces; from whence they thought of the arts, but with little success, because ignorance had occupied all the world, and this Empire being among nations barbarous and ferocious, separated from the commerce of countries of a climate soft and benign, and of customs mild, where

in other times the arts and sciences were flourishing, they did nothing excellent; and the sculptors, especially, dedicated themselves to imitate men in those ridiculous dresses which hide, but not adorn the figures. Such are all the monuments which are called Gothic, under which name are to be understood all the German and neighbouring nations.

In this unhappy state the arts remained for many ages without ever improving, until they began to revive in Italy; and particularly in the Republic of Florence. The first step was to collect medals and stones engraved by the ancients, and with that imitation they began to emerge from German barbarity. Ghiberto was the first who attempted to imitate the said antiquity, but as he never saw the grand statues of the Ancients, he remained famous only in trifles. To him succeeded Donatello; and soon after Michael Angelo Buonarroti profiting by the statues gathered from de' Medici, opened his eyes, and he saw that the ancients had possessed a certain art in the imitation of truth, with which they made the imitation more intelligible and beautiful than the original itself. That great artist sought the origin of beauty, and believed to have found it by means of Anatomy, upon which he fixed his greatest study, and arrived to such excellence that he immortalized himself by that new track, although he did not find in it that which he sought, namely, beauty, because it is not to be found in a sole part, but in the whole, and in the union of ana-

tomy, proportion, and other circumstances which compose beautiful things.

The other Sculptors of the Florentine school imitated Michael Angelo in the appearance of the anatomical style, but without arriving to the knowledge of their master and; in that John Bologna, Mont Orsoli, and others became much inferior, even until sculpture decayed with the fate of the Republic, and its Government passed to reestablish itself in Rome. Here Algardi began to introduce in sculpture the style which the painters of his time already followed; that is, he pretended to use in his art the same imitation of painting, searching the effects of elare obscure to augment certain parts by the sight: In short, he exceeded the limit of the end of sculpture, which is, to imitate the form of truth, and not the appearance, which is the office of painting: in this manner he introduced an affected style.

To Algardi succeeded Lorenzo Bernini, who began where the other had finished, and having dedicated himself entirely to puzzle the eye, made certain statues and groups with inventions the most bold and fanciful, and in a certain manner PLEASING, as we see by many of them at Rome, in which he always sacrificed, correctness to brilliancy, and made all the forms altered.

The sculptors who have come after, have shewn themselves undecided in the imitation of Algardi, and Bernini; and if they have availed of truth, it has been to find the forms, and

to subject them to the manner of the afore-said masters. The Fleming, who did children so charmingly, attempted to imitate antiquity in the figure of saint Susan, and succeeded in imitating the appearance, but not the essential maxims.

Rusconi has been the last of sculptors worthy of being cited. His works are more pleasing than perfect, because in place of good reasoning of the art, his beauty consists only in the observance of certain practical rules, which, in place of doing honour to the art, debase it.

By what I have until now explained of sculpture, one might infer that it was exalted by means of Philosophy, and that neglecting or forcing essential reasons, it so decayed that it has no appearance of imitation of the works of the ancients; and lastly, having abandoned its philosophical spirit, (the true end and object of the arts,) it precipitated into the despicable state in which it now is. Perhaps some will say that it has flourished and still flourishes in France, but you my dear friend have seen the works of those professors, and have easily discovered that it is not so. The same spirit which reigns among painters, persecuted the sculptors, that is, the abuse of excellence by entering too much in it.

As I have been able to observe in histories which treat of the arts that painting had been invented much later than sculpture, I have my doubts if the nations who cultivated sculpture before the Greeks had ever known painting. It

is not mentioned in the sacred writings, or in ancient history, or even by the Egyptians, from whence I conclude, that all those nations were ignorant of it before it was learnt by the Greeks; and since the origin of the arts consisted in the imitation of true things, I believe that for a long time they only made things carved, of colours resembling nature, and perhaps that idea came from the colours which the same materials had, and particularly baked earth, which resembles the colour of the skin. Pliny relates various histories of the invention of painting, but he himself judges those histories not to be very exact. He supposes it nevertheless very ancient, and cites some works done in Italy by the Grecians, which in his time were still preserved fresh in Lanuvium, although they were done a little after the destruction of Troy. The time in which that author says Bulaco flourished, is very ancient, and he supposes before that lived those who did the *MONOCROMATI*, that is, of one only colour. This passage of Pliny gives occasion to make some reflections, by reason of the *MONOCROMATI* which have been found in Herculaneum, and are in the collection of Portici, which, with a mind so great, and with so much good taste his Catholic Majesty began, and if he had continued with the same ardour and love for the arts, he would have satisfied the expectations of all nations, and all wise people.

These paintings, or to say better designs, done of only one colour, a dark red, upon a table

of white marble; have but an indifferent degree of excellence in respect to the profiles, but in all the rest of the style they appear as works done in the infancy of the art; as well in the taste which reigns in the cloathed parts, as in the extremities of the hands and feet. This opinion of mine upon the antiquity of these paintings, has not been approved by some learned persons who have written in the Greek language, saying that the letters in which the names of the persons represented are written, are of times very posterior. To those one might reply, that the author being an Athenian, that nation was able to surpass the other in the style of writing. But besides that this explanation does not satisfy me, I find other difficulties in the colours with which the said paintings are done, being, not of red earth, but of cinnabar which the ancients called MINIMUM or carmine, and we are certain that this colour was not known until even after Apelles. In fine if these paintings are not an imposition; that is, that also in that time they wished to make them pass more ancient, than what they really were, it would be necessary to say that painting flourished in Athens very late, or that the ignorant were not ashamed to put their names to their works, or that they were of some rich Amateur who was not obliged to know better; or finally, that they served for nothing but the credit of the history of painting.

Returning to our reflections I say, that not finding any thing of certainty in authors near the commencement of painting, we ought to be



lieve that it began by simple contours, filling the half with one colour only which most resembled the object they wished to represent. Some paintings of Herculaneum, made in imitation of Egyptian things, confirm my opinion. I do not say that these are of that time, but I believe them done in imitation of that taste, to make them pass for things truly Egyptian. In the same manner, or with little difference, has modern painting begun, as I shall presently describe, and thus the Chinese began, and we see they have proceeded but little further.

It is likely that this state of infancy in Grecian Painting (if ever it were so) remained but little time. Pliny, who compiled all the authors who wrote before him, although he does not treat of colours, except by casualty, yet he gives an idea of what must have been the colourists anterior to the MONOCROMISTS; and since he spoke, as I suppose, principally of Grecians, one might prudently conjecture, that that nation soon abandoned this style, and that they began to use a little of clear obscure and to make MONOCROMATI, and by little and little proceeded to join the variety of colours, and gradually, with the same philosophical spirit which distinguished them in Sculpture, they conducted painting even to the highest degree of perfection.

Polignotus, who flourished towards the time of Phidias, was the first who perfectly expressed customs, and by that merited so much applause in this florid time of Greece. Parrhasius was of a very fertile genius, and possessed all the parts of pain-

ting, as well as Zeuxis and others of that time. Protogenes was even more able and finished than them; and then came Apelles, who, having found the way open, and living in the age of Alexander the Great, in which time it appeared that nature made its utmost effort to produce and excite the greatest talents in order to sustain the glory and liberty of the country, added to the art of painting the last perfection; that is, Grace, which arises from the certainty which science gives painters to execute and produce facility in the same operation; and in thinking, and making themselves to be understood. Apelles was thus secure of possessing that prerogative, who in praising the qualities of other painters, said that he surpassed them only in Grace; and Protogenes retook it because he knew not how to detach his hands from his works. From this may be deduced that the art then arrived to its highest degree; but since the same could not advance further, or maintain itself in the same state, they began to augment their works in quality and size, dividing them in various classes, as for instance in low subjects, or buffooneries, and in a variety of extravagant things, such as CARICATURES, and other ridiculous species which painting suffered under the same misfortune of sculpture, until Roman luxury degraded it of that nobility with which it had been treated in Greece, by having all their Houses painted by miserable Grecians, or slaves, incapable of thinking much more of imitating the works of the happy times of Greece, when the people of a city, or of a

province entire gave the reward for a painting. To the contrary, in Rome, every opulent citizen painted only the most despicable walls of his edifice, and thought it would debase noble habitations to paint them, which they dressed with marble and bronze, where the expence did more honour than the taste. In the city of Herculaneum, Stabæa, and Pômpeia, happily discovered by his Catholic Majesty, one sees the most wretched houses painted, and even the Taverns and Inns; and if one sees some paintings in the Temples, Theatres, and public Edifices, yet the poverty of the country is known by the few marbles found there, in the mean time that in Rome they abounded with much profusion.

Now we will consider my friend, what has been the excellence of Grecian painters of the best time, and how much the works of these classical artists ought to be considered as surprising, whilst we prize so much those of Herculaneum. We know for certain that the ancients possessed design in the highest degree, because we see in their statues, and in those paintings of Herculaneum, that although Design is not the part most remarkable, yet one finds in it traces of the highest taste, and of a great facility of maintaining the just limits of the contours; that is, that they may not be overcharged, harsh, or dry. Above all, it is wonderful to see their great knowledge of clear obscure, and of the nature of air, which, being a body of some density, communicates, and reflects the light to the parts which do not receive the rays direct.

As I have observed, how even in the worst of these paintings that part has been understood, although executed with negligence it has stupified me to think, and to figure to myself, how they could have been the works of the most famous painters contemporary with the sculptors of an Apollo of Belvedere, of a Gladiator, of a Venus of Medicis, and other similar works, which are of artists of the first rank of antiquity.

Although the colouring of these paintings is not very excellent, we are not by that to doubt that the ancients possessed it in great perfection, when we know that they made a distinction between the two Ajaxs of different hands, saying that one was nourished with roses, and the other with flesh. They knew perspective, as one may find by the aforesaid paintings of Herculaneum; and if we do not understand it, I know not what Parrasius would wish to say, when he insisted that no one could be a good painter without geometry. That which perhaps the ancients did not possess as well as the moderns is, machinery composition, because their principal study was the perfection and quality of things, and not the quantity of them. One may believe that their style of composing paintings was little different from the style of bas-relief according as one sees in the same paintings of Herculaneum, in which the contrasts, the grace of the figures, the beautiful partitions, and the expressions are excellent. One knows even that they were done with quickness, and frank-

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ness, and painted with good fresco. In short if one compares these paintings with all the works of the moderns, and if one considers that they were done in a place of such little consequence, one may know how much the paintings of the ancients were superior to ours.

I have made this little digression, to remove the doubt which many have entertained, that the ancients were better painters than the moderns, founding their sentiments upon the mediocrity of the paintings of Herculaneum, and of others, which are conserved at Rome, without reflecting upon the unhappy state to which the Romans reduced painting. Painting had finally the same fate as sculpture, and the professors of both, falling into extreme ignorance and disregard, and contributing also to the abolition of idolâtry, one may say, that it was almost entirely forgotten, or at least reduced to a miserable state, which we see by some holy images, and barbarous mosaics, which are preserved in some ancient churches.

For many ages it remained in this miserable state; and the singularity is, that the same cause of its ruin, was the cause of its revival, that is, the worship of the christian religion. The great commerce of Italy with Greece, and other parts of the world, introduced opulence; and the Italians wishing to build churches, and to adorn them with images, employed these miserable painters, and Grecian artists of mosaics, to perform that little which they knew, and on this occasion, some Venetians, Bolog-

nians, Tuscans, and Romans, worked with the same rusticity which we see in their masters. Thus they proceeded dispersing the office of painting until the Tuscans raised it first from barbarism by means of Giotto and his school.

These Tuscans continued for some time in the style of the last Grecians in drapery, and in the partition of the figures; because finding themselves far from the Germans, and nearer Roman antiquity, and having also the opportunity of seeing the ancient medals, they studied also these things. After that first school, came others, which advanced a little more, as the Masolini, and the Masaccis, which in the air they gave to their dress, resemble the taste of Raphael, although he was anterior by almost an age. The unhappy style which they then introduced, retarded also the progress of the arts; which was, by placing contemporary persons in the paintings of Ancient History, with the dresses they then used in Florence; which injured very much their good taste. Nevertheless, they continued to advance in the art, by copying truth, and by the study of perspective; by which means, Ghirlandajo found the mode of a good disposition, and of the exactness of design. Leonardo da Vinci applied himself to clear obscure; and to the principal parts of painting. At the same time it advanced itself in the Venetian States, and in Lombardy, by means of Bellini, Mantegna, Bianchi, and others; but by the way which all those followed, the disciples succeeding in the maxims

of their masters, it was impossible that the arts could advance with ardour, or exceed the perfection of Leonardo da Vinci, and Peter Perugino, the first having already principals of grandeur, and the second a certain grace and easy simplicity.

In that state of things, it received a ray of the same light which illuminated it in ancient Greece, when Michael Angelo, who with his great talent, had already surpassed Ghirlandajo, saw the works of ancient Greece in the collection of the magnificent Lorenzo de' Medici. He attempted to imitate them in sculpture; and animated by emulation towards Leonard by the works which between both they had made in the hall of the old Palace at Florence, he gave a new aspect to painting.

Consider my friend, how many were the opportunities to revive their talents; when the government gave them a noble ambition, and employed them in great works. What sublime genius's are unknown, from not being discovered in time! But in that age, in which the greater felicity of the Florentine Republic was confined the loss of its liberty, and the great temporal Roman power, with the princes of its decay, all the powers of Europe found themselves in fermentation, and the ideas even of the lowest persons were great. In that time therefore, it happened that the greatest talents were employed in most extensive works, which served much to improve the arts. Michael Angelo was chosen to make a statue in marble,

of twenty two palms and an half; the most of a Colossus that any of the moderns ever undertook.

Pope Julius the second, determined to erect a magnificent Mausoleum, for which he called Michael Angelo to Rome; and, in the mean time that he was considering where to place it, he made him paint the ceiling of the Chapel of Sixtus the fourth. This great work was a vast field, and proportioned to the talents of that artist, who, at the age of thirty years only, knew how to encrease the fire of his genius instead of dissipating it.

Effectively in that Chapel, painted at different times, although consecutively, one sees that he improved his style, and without an occasion like this he would never have arrived to that degree which he did; because he there discovered greatness in the whole, exactness in the contours, knowledge in the form, great relief, and sufficient variety; of which they had not then a just idea.

In the time of the same Pontificate Raphael was called to Rome to paint the Vatican Hall. This sublime genius began the undertaking of these spacious walls, and before he finished the first painting he enlarged his style,

He began the second, which was that of Philosophy, called the School of Athens, with the ideas and maxims which he had terminated the first, and he carried painting substantially to the highest degree in which it has been seen since the time of the Greeks. All those parts which



could be added to the arts after Michael Angelo, one finds united in this work. The composition, invention, expression, drapery, the variety of the characters, the knowledge, and subtilty of the art, one sees here executed with wonderful facility.

Raphael continued to paint the other Hall, and when he discovered the first part of the ceiling of Michael Angelo, then it was that he most pleased. They say that Raphael first studied in Florence the cartons of that painting; but although that be true; it was not a proper style applicable to the indifferent paintings which he then finished in the chambers of the Vatican. Michael Angelo was able to please Raphael when he completed the work of the Sixtina, and discovered some greater facility and sweetness; and of that great style, so pure and regulated, he composed a third style, with which he then finished his paintings.

The first fruit of this new style of Raphael was the Prophet Isaiah, which is in a pilastre of the Church of Saint Agustin at Rome: it has all the greatness of the prophets of the Chapel Sixtina, but with the difference, that in this is hid all the artifice of the aforesaid greatness, and in it is discovered too much the intention of the author. They relate that a dispute having arose about the price between Raphael and him who ordered that prophet, Raphael left it to the decisive judgment of Buonrotti, who said that the sole naked knee was worth more than the sum in dispute; from whence one deduces

the generous probity of both. Condivi relates another expression of Raphael, which proves still more his magnanimous character, because he assures that that professor returned thanks to God for having been born in the time of Michael Angelo. With such greatness of mind, persons of true merit know how to be emulous!

Raphael painted in the aforesaid style the Sibyls of peace, which in their kind could not be very excellent, and with the same tenor he proceeded in his other works.

His last, which is the transfiguration, contains such delicacy in the art, as well in theory as in practice, and in the execution of the parts painted by his hand, that it gives pain to consider that we have lost at thirty seven years of age a genius so sublime, born with the same spirit of the ancient Greeks, and if he had flourished in that time, and with the same opportunities he would have discovered the same qualities, because among the moderns he has been the only one who has possessed the most essential requisites of the art, such as expression, variety, invention, composition, design, colouring, and drapery. In fine in order to equal the ancients, he wanted nothing but the style of beauty, which certainly, neither in the schools or customs of his time could he then learn.

At the same time Giorgione who was a little anterior to Titian, founded a school of painting at Venice; which school made great progress from the opportunities they had of painting great

Facades and Saloons. As Titian by living at Venice had not the opportunity of examining ancient works, he could not fundamentally acquire a great style like Michael Angelo, and for that reason he placed not in the knowledge of the forms all that attention which they merited, and applied himself more to the appearance of truth, which depended upon the colours of the body, and arrived in that part by continual exercise of painting and copying nature, to such excellence that he has never been equalled; and to this contributed much the magnificence of the Venetian Gentlemen, who wished to be painted by him, or to have from his hand paintings of naked women.

Contemporary with Titian, the Duke of Mantova employed Mantegna, and in Modena he established the first academy that has been in Italy, from which came Bianchi, master to Anthony Allegri named Correggio. He was called to Parma to paint the Church of Saint John of the Benedictine monks, and with this work, which for that time was very great, he formed a proportionate style, and gave so much taste to the Parmazans that they commissioned him to paint the Cupola of the Cathedral.

That great genius profited of the merit of other painters anterior and contemporary. He took the first rudiments from Bianchi, and then studied under Mantegna, who was a learned man, and a passionate admirer of the ancients, and obliged him to study their works. Correggio exercised also the PLASTICA, working in

company with Begarelli and by the exercise of sculpture which facilitated much the knowledge of bodies, and by the study of antiquity he surpassed the limits of the miserable and confined style of his Masters, and was the first who dedicated himself to relieve the sight by a certain softness and grace of which he was the inventor, and in which he has never after been equaled.

The principal merit of his works consisted in relief, and in the knowledge of clear obscure, as well in the imitation of truth in the bodies, as in the invention of the mass.

In this manner painting arrived at that time to a higher degree of perfection than ever the moderns had carried it; having acquired by Michael Angelo fierceness of contours, the forms of the most robust bodies, and the highest grandeur; by Raphael, Invention, Composition, Variety of Characters, Expression of the state of the Mind, and of dressing well the bodies; by Titian the knowledge of the colours of bodies with all the accidents which the modifications of light can produce in them, and finally by Correggio delicacy and the degradations of Clear Obscure, amorous painting, and the exquisiteness of Grace and Taste.

Painting being in such a state, it was very natural that it should advance under the direction of such great masters, or that it should degenerate into capricious novelty; which effectively it did. The Tuscans wishing to follow Michael Angelo, imitated only something of the form of

his fierce contours; but without the knowledge and understanding of their master; and thus they pretended to imitate Salviate, Bronzino Vafari, and others.

In the same manner the Disciples of Raphael took only some part of him, but none of them took the essential. Giulio Romano wishing to imitate seriousness and expressiveness, made the physiognomy horrible and affected. Polidoro in wishing to be easy, gave into licentiousness. Piccino inclined always to the Tuscan style. Penni was cold and inanimate. Pellegrino Manari was of short life; and thus finished that illustrious school.

Correggio left not any Disciple worthy of him, because Parmigianino who immediately followed him, made a mixture of the style of the Disciples of Raphael, and of the grace of Correggio, which he overcharged.

Although Titian had not Disciples who imitated him in every thing, the Venitians were nevertheless more fortunate, because painting continued and was supported by means of Paolo Veronese, who imitated no one, and formed his style by following nature, whilst all the other imitators and followers of the said masters, endeavoured to imitate some of their parts, but forgetting the first end of the art, which is to imitate truth.

It is constant and proved by experience, that every age has its particular character, which by means of a general ferment, enlivens the imaginations of men. Be it by casualty or by other

causes, which are useless here to examine, it is certain that in the fourteenth and fifteenth age arose throughout the world geniuses great in arms, and in the arts.

In Germany, France, Flanders, and in Holland, the arts appeared also; but the climate did not permit them to make the progress, generally speaking, as in Italy, and their ideas remained insignificant. Nevertheless, as these were industrious and diligent people, they showed in some parts more or less of their Genius.

In Flanders, and in Holland, where there was most commerce, and consequently most riches, they began to produce some painters who remained also estimable in the line of pure imitation of truth. In those countries, where there was a little more instruction by reason of its communication with Italy, as well as in the free cities of Augusta and Norimberg, flourished also painting, and particularly also carving, which must have given much opportunity to engrave arms and to make moulds for printing, then invented with so much utility to literature and commerce; and many books being published at that time with cuts engraved in plates, and on wood, that gave motive to many to apply themselves to painting, to be able to invent and design these things. Albert Durer found the art of engraving much advanced in regard to mechanism, and he added more corrections in design and invention; and, with the study of perspective, he found also the manner of placing the figures and groups in different stages, and of giving profundity to

his inventions, as Ghirlandajo had done at Florence. Many wished to imitate Durer, who, had he been born in Italy would have acquired taste; but neither him, or his imitators, could rise from barbarism; not seeing any other figures than those of their country, or other dresses than the extravagant ones of their time. To all other nations it happened the same, and they remained deprived of a good taste, until they had communication with Italy, and there learnt the arts.

The war, which at the end of that florid age, happened throughout Europe, was a great misfortune for them, and particularly for Italy. The Italian Princes occupied themselves almost entirely in military occupations, and cooled in their love for the arts. The ruin by the war desolated many provinces and cities. Rome suffered infinitely from the famous sack which the Spaniards and Germans gave it under Bourbon. Florence lost its liberty, and all Italy was in violent convulsion. Venice only remained exempt from that universal pillage; and the great Titian outlived the greatest turbulence; but money generally failing, or to say better, increasing to all the Italian Princes the necessity of supplying the exorbitant expences of the war, they failed in rewarding the arts, and the artists dedicated themselves to diligent labour, and with a style affected and overcharged, so that the arts languished for a long time.

By good fortune, were born at Bologna, some great geniuses, which were the Caraccis. They contented themselves with small recompences, as the sons of poor fathers, and applied themselves with the greatest attention to surpass the Procaccinis, who were here much envied on account of being foreigners. Lewis, the eldest, had studied the works of Correggio, and superficially imitated his style in the grandeur of the forms and the mass. He was master to his cousins, Hannibal and Agustin, who had much talent, and studied a good style, but were addicted to work in haste; and by that the first works of Hannibal are of good taste, but overcharged and little studied. He improved by studying Correggio, but since his talent was more of a mechanic than an artist, he imitated his model only in a part of the appearance, and not in the fundamentals of the style; and by that he could never acquire grace, delicacy, or softness. He caused, notwithstanding, great benefit to the art in learning taste by a new way more easy, because all his predecessors who sought taste, gave into extravagance, and exceeded the bounds of reason.

When Hannibal was at Venice, he in part imitated Paolo Veronese. He came however to Rome, and saw the works of Raphael, and the ancient statues, which soon made him a painter of another style. He moderated his fire; reformed the caricature of his forms; and sought beauty in the ancient character; but still conserved a part of the style of Correggio to maintain his grandeur. In



short, he became a painter, who after the three luminaries of modern painting merited the first place.

Lewis came to assist Hannibal in the work of the Pharnetian Gallery ; but seeing that it was more difficult to content Rome than Bologna, he returned to his country, where he undertook the painting of the cloyster of Saint Michael in Bosco, and there employed a style more studied and of better taste, and discovered his esteem for Raphaël, by placing in one of his histories the Sapho of Parnassus of the Vatican.

To these Carraccis we owe the restoration of painting ; and from their school came the celebrated Guido, a painter of much merit, easy, and elegant, and who would have been another Raphael if he had had better precepts.

Dominichino, who attached himself more to the ancient form, one knows to have studied particularly the Laocœon, and the Gladiator. Lanfranco, of fertile genius, applied himself to the study of the distributions of the masses, and of the motions of the works of Correggio, and especially of the Cupola of the Cathedral at Parma, taking the sole appearance, and not the subtle reasons of the art ; and Albano, who studied the forms of the ancients, was a graceful painter. In short, none of the disciples of the Carraccis were of bad taste.

Guercino da Cento was original in his style. He had great knowledge in clear obscure ; and

if he had given more nobility to things, he would have been as estimable as Guido Reni.

The same spirit which the Caraccis left in Italy, soon produced painters of merit in other nations. In Spain, that profession began to flourish in the time of Charles the Vth. and of Philip the II<sup>nd</sup>. by reasons aforesaid, and on account of the great work undertaken by this last King. It was unfortunate for Spain, that at that time, painting was adulterated by caricature and affected figures; and as the major part of painters who were there, were of the Florentine school, in which design was always prevalent, and a certain melancholy severity of style, this remained, until the Spaniards saw the works of Rubens, which pleased many so much, that they dedicated themselves with ardour to imitate them, and they made thus, a rare mixture of their own, and of that style.

James Velasquez was averse to making himself a follower of any one, and with his noble talent formed a character of his own, founding it in the imitation of truth, and in the most exact observations of the reasons and effects of clare obscure, taking a style of painting with resolution, and as one might say, with despatch, indicating the things which he had seen in truth without deciding them, or copying them. In spite of these principles, as Velasquez, and much less the other painters of the Spanish school, had not had the exact ideas of the merits of the Grecian works either in beauty or the ideal, they proceeded imitating one the

other, and the greatest talents imitated truth, but without choice, and were pure naturalists.

Of the Flemings, as I have said, some had seen Italy, and became middling painters; but the major part, moved by utility more than glory, applied themselves to small pieces of country scenes, flowers, animals, and similar things. Rubens had finally a superior talent, and having studied the great Titian at Venice, attempted to imitate him, by taking a way more easy; and, wishing to secure himself of pleasure in appearance, he overcharged as much as his model had of beauty, and with so much force, that he had not the first simple ideas and attention to truth, like Titian; and by that he exceeded the limits of the contours, and had little regard to truth. He had, notwithstanding, the same merit of the Caraccis in Italy; that is, he was the father of the Flemish school, which before him, had no proper character.

Anthony Vandyke, who painted in the same time, was more the friend of truth; especially in portraits, in which he merited the first rank after Titian; and in the accessory parts he was still more elegant. All the other Flemish professors merited esteem, according as they more or less approached these two masters.

In France, they began to know the ancients, by means of the works which Francis the Ist. imported from Italy, to adorn, with statues and paintings, Fontainebleau; where he employed

Rosso, Primaticcio, and Nicola dell' Abate; but with all that, the arts made but little progress there, by reason of civil wars, until the time of Louis XIII. and XIV.; and although Rubens painted the gallery of the Luxembourg, the few ancient works which there were in France, preserved that nation from the contagion of that style.

The culture of the Belles Lettres, and the translation which they published of the Grecian authors, infused in that nation, the desire of imitating the ancients, and all the artists wished and endeavoured to visit Rome; and in that manner, although for a long time they had not to boast of any eminent painter, yet they did not introduce at least any vicious style. Finally, among the many who came to Rome, Nicholas Poussin was him who proposed to imitate entirely the style of the ancients, and if the customs of his age had not impeded him, he would have obtained his end. Painting always in oil small pieces, took from him the opportunity of enlarging his style, or of executing works of so much study as those of the first men of Italy. Considering, however, his works only as sketches, they are excellent.

Immediately after Poussin, ought to be placed Charles le Brun; who also studied in Italy. He was of a lively genius, and an estimable inventor, and had opportunities of shewing it in the great works ordered by Louis the XIVth. In the same mode, were also the good painters, Mignard, le Sueur, Bourdon, and others; until

France quitted the good road, and serious study, to be accounted by some artists of talents, which they call HOMMES D'ESPRIT, like Jovenet, and Coypel, who went out of the limits of the good and the beautiful, by loading the one and the other placing too much in the whole, and aspiring to please the eye more than the reason.

It is not surprising that this happened in France, when even in Italy they abandoned the good taste of the school of the Caraccis. Who could have imagined in the time of Michael Angelo that there could have come from the Tuscan school a John of Saint John, a painter of so much merit, but so far from the solid style? And especially a Peter of Cortona, to frustrate all the ideas of the art in Italy; despising serious study, which even to his time had been the fundament of painting, reducing the whole to only such compositions, as could seduce the sight. At the same time one sees in Rome, Andrew Sacchi, a painter of the same taste, and of the same ease of Cortona, teaching to leave paintings only to indicate, and taking the ideas of natural things, without giving them any determination.

The schools of Florence and Rome, changed their road. Those of Bologna and Lombardy extinguished insensibly; because to Albano succeeded Cignani, and Ventura Lambertini; and to those Franceschino, Joseph del Sole, and the capricious Crespi, who one may call the last. In Venice, after the great men, Giorgione, Titian, Paolo, and Tintoretto,

painting decayed at once, because the successors regarded only ease, without searching the fundaments und excellence of these; and that which is generally called taste, has remained as the sole object of that school.

Rome was a little more happy; because to Andrew Sacchi, succeeded Carlo Maratta, his disciple, who applied himself much to design the works of Raphael in the Vatican, and took even from his youth the love of serious and exact study, but the general taste of his time, did not permit him to follow entirely the character of Raphael, and the opportunity of always painting Madonnas, and Altar-pieces, carried him to a mixed style of those of the Caraccis and Guido, and thus he sustained the painting of Rome, and prevented its decay as in other countries.

In the mean time that this happened in Rome, Lucas Giordano formed a new school at Naples. He took his first principles from Ribera; he went to Rome to study rapidly the Carracis and their school, and finished by choosing the style of Cortona. With this Capital he returned to Naples, and was so applauded there, that he founded, as I have said, a school, from whence came Solimena in company with others, and as in that time they were deficient in Rome of painters of merit, one of the disciples of Solimena, called Sebastian Conca, brought there that style of painting, and those maxims, more easy than good, by which he finished the ruin of painting.

In that manner is the noble art lost to our time, because they knew how to spread, as one may say, fragments of the idea of some professors, that more good arises from a mere and material practice, than from rules and principles founded upon reason.

Artists are generally flatterers of the eyes of amateurs, and those have destroyed their judgment and senses by the vices of the last schools.

Before finishing, I would wish to say something of architecture, as sister of the other two noble arts. I have considered it in two different aspects; as it arises from two different principles; one being necessity, and the other the delight of the imagination. With regard to the first, it ought not to be ranked among the Belle Arts, but among the mechanics, because to place a man under cover from all the inclemency of the weather, or building with solidity, has nothing to do with beauty; and in fact we see in that part the works of the Egyptians, Arabs, and Goths, have not ceded to the Greeks and Latins. But who will ever esteem them as beautiful as these? Speaking however of the origin of that art, it is likely that it was invented and improved by different countries, according to their climates and materials, and to the wants of the people.

The nature of warm climates, and scarceness of trees, must have led men to repair to grottos and mountains; and in cold climates, to woods, where must have arisen the idea of con-

structing in the last countries, cabans; and in the first, grottos.

The population of the world increasing, it is very natural that those nations, who lived a pastoral life, should have thought of constructing tents, which are another kind of buildings.

Until this time, necessity regulated the delights of men; but since they could not for a long time accommodate themselves to the same train of things, they soon advanced from that state, and naturally desiring in all things some object which could agreeably occupy the senses and understanding, they possessed in the whole some ornament; that is, a certain something, without which, a thing would be that which it ought to be, and give one occasion to think and fix the attention; as we see that even the barbarous nations put in all their furniture, spots, colours, and figures, although without taste and symmetry: one sees, however, that it is inseparable with human reason, to wish to make things after some idea.

If we examine the principles of history and of architecture, we shall find that it originated in the East, after the idea of mountains and hills, men heaping up stones and earth to cover themselves, and attempting at the same time a competition with nature. The vast walls built in the first times, are no more than hills, which inclose a portion of people, and form those immense cities which history mentions; and the tower of Babel was a true mountain.



The pyramids and other ruins, which are still to be seen in Egypt, present the same idea. The Egyptians invented, long before the Greeks, the use of human figures, and animals, to sustain their edifices; animating as one may say, those stones that ought to support part of the fabric. The form of their columns has no elegance, and perhaps they did not use them, until they were known to the Greeks. In the other edifices of Asia, and of the most remote antiquity, one cannot discover even the least elegance, and one may say, they did not possess the art of architecture, but only the art of building.

The Greeks of Asia Minor, were the first who gave form to the art, by introducing beauty in their buildings. Vitruvius and others refer to that origin; and in fact, one sees, that the idea of tents and cabans, is preserved even in the most magnificent edifices; but since architecture has no origin or prototype in nature, it could not presently find proportions more beautiful, and remained exposed to the caprices and ideas of men, of times, and of circumstances.

The first Greeks, who thought strength was the most useful quality of man, imagined the character of robustness. Then civil police encreasing, and customs being softened, they began to esteem the beautiful, and gave more elegance to their edifices; but as nature had endowed them with a philosophical genius, they kept themselves within the limits of moderation,

nor dedicated themselves to superfluous ornaments, and luxuries; but contented themselves with the limits of reason, and in this medium consists the beauty of Architecture. The foundation of that art began by necessity, and from the use of building; its beauty is in the character correspondent to the end proposed in the forms and ornaments; and its limit is reason. The Greeks in their beautiful times observed all that.

The Romans, (a nation more rich and luxuriant than the Greeks,) loaded their architecture with ornaments, and introduced more orders, and more divisions; and finally lost that beautiful simplicity and solidity, breaking off the principal members with capricious contours. When finally they lost the esteem of the Belle Arts in the Roman Empire, by being occupied by continual wars; and when the invasion of the Moors destroyed even the principles of good taste, came the time which we know under that of Gothic Architecture; not because that tribe of barbarians transported into Italy any natural style of architecture, but that they used their own buildings, wishing to imitate without rule the ancient edifices which they had themselves destroyed; and framing the ideas which discovered to them their natural ignorance, and in order quickly to finish their buildings, they neglected the study of good taste, and of beautiful proportions.

Also the translation of the Imperial residence from Rome to Constantinople, and the division of the Eastern and Western Empire, contributed

much to the ruin of the art. The countries ignorant and remote, such as France and Germany, not knowing even the principles of Grecian architecture, it was not possible that they could introduce a good taste, and by that they not had only some idea of the art of building. Perhaps by means of religion, and some fugitive Grecian monks, they communicated to the aforesaid nations some idea of the edifices of Constantinople; and with that they constructed some temples, employing only the pure rules of the mechanism of building. Finally they augmented that method, and making all merit consist in difficulty and boldness, and not in elegance, appeared in those nations, such extravagant and strange things, totally contrary to good taste and reason; and casually they established that taste of Architecture which by abuse they called Gothic, and which is truly German.

The new Empire being established in Germany, the splendour of the court was the cause which propagated its fashions in other nations, and in that manner the aforesaid style of architecture extended itself throughout Europe, and remained until Italy had dissipated every barbarism that was introduced there. The Venitians, I believe, were the first who in honour to St. Mark, built a magnificent temple, availing of a Grecian architect, who, notwithstanding he preserved the barbarous style of the age, was not so extravagant in the proportions, as those who are called purely Gothics. Arches and cupolas partake also of grandeur in their curves, although very far from true beauty.

Finally the Florentines, by means of Orcagna, began to abandon that deformed style; and Brunelleschi was the first who reduced the minds of the Italians to the taste of Grecian Architecture. Bramante and San-Gallo approached it a little more, and from their examples many others dedicated themselves to study a good style. Also Michael Angelo applied himself to that Grecian style; but finding it perhaps too sterile for his fiery and fertile genius, he began and ended with the most ardent and intrepid ideas. The grandeur of the building of said Peter gave opportunities to those fervent talents to banish and place in entire forgetfulness, the ideas of the German style.

San-Michele, San-Sovino, Palladio, and Scamozzi adorned the state of Venice, and all these united together to diffuse by their buildings, good taste throughout Italy; as also by their books which they published, especially Palladio, Scamozzi, Serlio, and Vignola.

If architecture had been able to maintain itself in that state which those great masters had established, it would not have been so little fortunate; but the love of novelty and the ambition of the artists, in wishing to be all inventors, made them soon give into a thousand extravagancies and disproportions; and in place of reasoning upon the ideas of the firm men who had raised the arts from barbarity, they loaded members upon members, interrupting the most essential, foolishly inventing minute and ridiculous contours, and losing sight of the good cha-

rafter, and majestic proportions; so that they remained attached to rules, and passed for stubborn and stupid men.

Thus proceeded architecture even to Bernini, who, in spite of his licence, had a gay style. Peter of Cortona was very capricious, and Borromini extravagant, even to the most furious folly. From that time architecture has no longer had reins, and one believes all that lawful which one finds examples of in the aforesaid professors, from which have arisen a variety of incredible inventions, some ingenious, but no work truly beautiful.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

# MEMOIRS

OF THE

LIFE AND WORKS OF ANTHONY ALLEGRI,

CALLED

CORREGGIO,



## M E M O I R S

CONCERNING

THE LIFE AND WORKS OF ANTHONY ALLEGRI,

DENOMINATED

C O R R E G G I O.

VERY confused are the accounts which we have of the life of Correggio. Some say that he was born in the year 1490, and others, with more foundation, say that he was born four years after that date, at Correggio, or a village near it. His real name was Anthony Allegri, but he latinized it in signing and putting in his paintings Læti; but nevertheless he always was, and is known by the name of his country, Correggio. Nothing is known of his family: we know only that he was twice married, and that he had children by both wives. From the first was born at Correggio, Pompey, or, as others call him, Pomponio; and in Parma a daughter in 1524, and another in 1526. In the year following he had the third daughter by the second wife.



There are doubts also of the time of his death ; but it appears certain that he died the 5th March 1534, at the age of 40 years. Some say that he was very poor, and of low extraction ; others make him rich and of noble family, and that he left a good inheritance to his son Pompey ; but in neither the one or the other accounts have ever appeared any documents. I believe equally false the two extremes, and that he was rich in proportion to the country in which he lived, and the little money in circulation at that time, as one might infer from the kind of money with which we know that they paid him for his works. The authors who have written his life, have compared him with the painters who lived in great courts and rich cities, such as Rome, Venice, and Florence ; and have had reason to lament the fate of Correggio, considering his great merit. That however does not prove that he was not possessed of something sufficient to live in philosophical felicity, contenting himself with a simple life, equal with that of his fellow-citizens ; aspiring to be better but not richer than them. That which is certain, is, that in his paintings one does not see any sign of that economy, or avarice, which is observable in poor painters, or those who wish for riches ; because his works are painted on good wood, on fine canvas, or on copper, and often re-touched with accuracy and study. The colours which he used are of the most chosen and difficult to practice. He employed with profusion in the drapery, flesh, and fields, the ultramarine, and strongly impacted the whole ; a thing

which one does not see in any other painter. His lacca was the most fine, and for that reason we see it preserved even to our time; and his green colours are so beautiful as not to be surpassed.

Lastly, it is of little importance whether Correggio was poor or rich. That which evidently results from his works is, that his education ought to have been very good; and what P. Orlandi relates is very likely to be true, which is, that Correggio studied philosophy, mathematics, painting, architecture, sculpture, and every sort of erudition; and of course conversed with the most famous professors of his time. In fact, in his principal works one discovers a very learned and poetical style of thinking; as for example, in his painting of the Education of Love, where he represents Venus with wings and with a bow, to signify that the Mother of Love, who moves the heart of men and gods, is of a celestial origin; and the same graceful allegories are to be found in all his other compositions, as we shall see in the descriptions of his paintings.

At that time flourished in Modena, according to the account of Vedriani, an academy of Painting and Sculpture, which had produced some good artists; among which were Francisco Bianchi, surnamed *il Frari*, and Pellegrino Munari, known by the name of *Pellegrino of Modena*.

Correggio began to learn painting of the aforesaid Bianchi, and from thence passed to study under Andrew Mantegna. It is probable also that he studied architecture, as one sees by his works.

and here he acquired a beautiful and grand taste ; and, according to the laudable customs of that time, he applied himself also to sculpture, but I know not if he arrived to work in marble. It is however certain that he worked in *plastica* and stucco, because they still preserve in Modena, in the church of Saint Margaret, a Deposition of Anthony Begarelli, sculptor of Modena, and great friend of Correggio, who did with his own hand three of the figures. It is not known for certain whether Begarelli learned sculpture from Correggio, or Correggio from Begarelli, or, if they studied together ; but it is however certain that this is the best work of Begarelli, who made many others alone even to the year 1555. The aforesaid Vedriani writes that Begarelli assisted Correggio, making him the models for the celebrated work of the cupola of Parma ; from whence one concludes that he served him, and that the painter was not so poor as is generally pretended, because he employed and paid a sculptor, who in that time had the first reputation in Lombardy, and of whom Michael Angelo made much account. I do not pretend, by that, that Correggio was very rich : every one will think as he likes ; however, I know not in our time any painter who is in a situation to pay a good sculptor for making him necessary models of so vast a work as that of Parma.

The works are very rare to which Correggio put his name, and the date in which he did them ; from whence it is very difficult to fix the epoch when he began to offer his works to the public,

or the style of his first labours. Among his paintings, which from Modena have passed to Dresden, one only is with his signature, but without date; and here one distinguishes the style of his masters, as I shall presently relate. Nor is there any considerable work by which one can devise by what way he abandoned the dry manner of his masters, and acquired that great and noble style which he always followed afterwards.

Since no one has recorded how Correggio made his studies, or by what means he advanced so much in his profession, it will be permitted me to make some conjecture upon the same.

We know that Pellegrino Munari, on hearing the fame which Raphael had acquired, proposed to go and study under him; and, abandoning his country, went to Rome. When Pellegrino took this resolution, Correggio then studied at Modena, and probably heard the same praises of Raphael and of Michael Angelo. Shall we say then that he was less studious, and less a lover of the art and of glory, than Pellegrino? He certainly cannot say it who has observed the works of an artist, who even from his beginning was superior to his masters; and who imagined a mutation so rapid as from his first to his second style, and who, not content with being equal to many great men, and superior to all in his country, abandoned notwithstanding that style, and undertook, by means of new studies and the most profound meditation, to change almost the art of painting. By that I incline to believe that Correggio went to Rome, where he saw and studied the works of

Raphael, and much more those of Buonaroti; but being of a mild and modest character, and only occupied in the study of his art, he fled the amusements of company, and the acquaintance of other painters, and by that did not subject himself to the style of any one, nor was an imitator of any one, but took beauty wherever he found it.

Some people will tell me, it is not known that ever Correggio went to Rome; but I will reply, that not knowing it does not prove that he never was there; because frequently we see that what many people have done, is not known until they have acquired a certain reputation; and generally are known in Rome only those Professors who work there, and not foreigners who go there for the sole end of study, and it is probable that Correggio was of this number; and this probability will acquire more force by other reasons which I shall presently adduce.

It appears to me incredible, that Correggio was not esteemed in his own country, and those around it, as some would give to understand; whilst the most important works of his time were committed to him. The first cupola ever painted was that of Saint John at Parma, and the painter was Correggio, who completed it in 1522; the second was that of the cathedral of the same city, and painted by the same in 1530. These great works, which were committed to him, shew that he was reputed as the first painter; and that if he had not gained great honour by the first, he would not have been employed in the second; and they would have sought other

painters, which were not then wanting in Venice and in Lombardy itself. To this might be added that which Ruta says, that when the aforesaid cupola was finished, Correggio was paid the remainder of its price, which was 170 scudi of gold in copper money; and that, having carried this sum upon his shoulders, it heated him and brought on a malady of which he died at the age of forty years and seven months, and was buried in the cloysters of Saint Francis. According to that information, the price which they gave him for painting the cupola must have been much more than the said sum which remained; because in a work so great as that, it was regular and almost necessary to have supplied him with different sums in the course of his work. Being thus, Correggio could not have been so ill paid, if one considers the age, the country, and the value then of money; and if we compare it to the prices which were paid to Raphael (who was the best paid of any painter of his age) for the rooms of the Vatican, which was 1200 scudi of gold for each.

To that might be added what Vasari says, which is, "that Duke Frederick of Mantua, wishing to give two paintings to Charles V. at the time of his coronation, which happened at Bologna in 1530, thought of Correggio to execute them." He ought therefore to have been a professor much esteemed, when a well-informed prince preferred him, to Giulio Romano, whom he held in his service, and knew that the Emperor had Titian at his disposal;

from which it might be argued, that wishing to make his gift more valuable, he chose Correggio to meet better the taste of that monarch.

I conclude from all this, that although the memoirs of the life of Correggio are so confused and uncertain, one may nevertheless be assured that he had the best education, and that he learnt as much as suited his profession; and that his paintings are productions of a sublime, delicate, and cultivated genius; because every one who knows the art, and is even but superficially informed, must be convinced that without the aforesaid quality, it was impossible for Correggio to produce such famous works. If he were not rich, he certainly was very generous to paint with so little economy as he did; and finally it appears evident to me, that he arrived to acquire great honour and reputation. But in fine it is of little consequence whether he was noble or a plebeian, rich or poor, when we know that he was a great painter, and that his works invite one to follow him, and instruct us. To this effect I have gathered all the information I have been able of his paintings, which I am going to describe; and although perhaps there are others which I am not acquainted with, yet these will be sufficient to give an idea of his wonderful talent, which in so short a life could produce so many works with so much study, assiduity and delicacy, and so finished that only to consider them with due accuracy it appears impossible to have performed them in so short a life.

There were some paintings in France of the

most beautiful style of Correggio; and among others those two which the Duke of Mantua presented to Charles V. and which the Duke of Orleans bought of the hereditary Duke of Bracciano. One represents Læda, and the other Danaë. The Emperor sent these paintings to Prague, and had them placed in the royal palace, where they remained till the famous thirty years war, when, that city being sacked by the Swedes, Gustavus Adolphus sent them to Stockholm. That king being dead, they remained unknown in the minority of Queen Christina, until an ambassador, who knew the history, sought after these paintings, and by these means they were traced out and found serving as shutters for the windows of a stable. They were repaired the best possible, and that Queen esteemed them as they merited: she carried them herself to Rome as precious things, and obtained previous license of the Pope to take them out of the popedom whenever she wished. After her death they passed to the hands of Don Livio Odescalchi, among many other valuable things of that Queen, and that gentleman held them in much esteem as long as he lived: but his heirs selling many of his rarities, the Duke of Orleans, Regent of France, bought them and the statue of Philip V. King of Spain, from whom they fell into the hands of the father of the present Duke, who from rigorous principles caused them to be destroyed in his presence in order not to be deceived; and he burnt the head of Iô, another painting of Correggio, which appeared to him the most expressive. The remain-



ing pieces of that painting were collected by Charles Coypel, first painter to the King of France; and when he died, another French painter made it a new head; and in this state a financier bought the painting, and from whom the King of Prussia purchased it at a high price. It is said that the Læda had the same fate of the Iö; and if the Danaë is still preserved, it is, however, so hidden that I know not of any one who has been fortunate enough ever to have seen it.

The painting of Læda is more an allegory than a fable. The principal figure represents a woman with a swan in her lap, which appears as if it would wish to approach its bill to her lips. She is sitting by the side of the water, in which she has one foot. Since the fable supposes that Jove is transformed into a swan to enjoy Læda, this painting is called always by the name of Læda. But at the side of this figure one sees an infant girl, who, with an innocent air, endeavours to defend herself from another swan, which attacks her as he is swimming in the water, in which is the young girl up to the ankles. Further on there is a young woman, who, in the act of being dressed by a servant, views with attention another swan, which flies, and appears as if departed from the place where she is; and she, in viewing it, shows signs of joy and satisfaction. Further on is the half-figure of a woman rather advanced in years, dressed, and in expressions of grief. At the other part of the principal figure is a Cupid, who, with much

grace, touches a lyre of ancient make; and there are also two of the Loves, who with various horns have made an instrument which they are sounding. All this is represented with a grace of which Correggio alone was capable. The field is a grove of branched trees, of various kinds; and the fore-ground is occupied by a lake of pure water, which appears a crystal, and extends to that part of the painting where are the afore-said women. All is very beautiful, and appears a painted poem, which has for object all the various accidents of love\*.

The other painting of Danaë clearly represents that fable, but with a spirit truly poetical. One sees Danaë gracefully lying down in bed: a beautiful Cupid, or be it Hymen, sustains with one hand the hem of the sheet which covers her lap, where she receives the shower of gold in which Jove is transformed, and with the other hand shows her the beauties of those drops, which she looks at with complacency and very expressive pleasure. At the feet of the bed are two Loves, who, playing, prove upon a touch-stone the one a drop of gold, and the other the point of an arrow; and the last appears of a character much more robust than the other, certainly to denote that love arises from the wound of the arrow; and that its ruin is gold. This painting is all grace, and the Hymen has the most beautiful countenance that can be imagined, and all

\* Besides many other copies of this painting, there is a print engraved with good taste by Du-Change.

the figure is designed with such elegance that no modern painter has ever exceeded it. The clear obscure surprises, and, notwithstanding the body is in part a little illuminated, it is still so clear and so reflective, that one knows not that it is in the shade, which is however strong, but it gives greater relief to the thighs, which receive the light, especially the left thigh which has the appearance as if detached from the painting. The head of Danaë is made in imitation of the Venus of Medicis, and has the same kind of hair. Correggio added only the necessary expression to his subject, and a character a little more youthful\*.

The painting of 16 is of equal beauty, and the back of the figure is there represented, to avoid the act too scandalous which would have arisen by making it in front; and since Jove is there represented as transformed in a cloud, any other form would have destroyed all the grace of the figure, so that it is impossible to imagine better a similar subject. I say nothing of the expression, which, if it has any defect, it is that of being too perfect and significant, because, as well in the head as in the shoulders, in the hand or in the feet, which are the parts one sees, it is impossible to express that lascivious act with more heat.

After Correggio had fulfilled the part of the painter, he added that of the poet; figuring in the field a stag, which, in the act of drinking,

\* Du-Change has also engraved this painting.

discovers all the anxiety of satisfying the thirst and ardour of love.

There is a second of this painting in the gallery of Vienna, accompanied by another of equal size, in which Correggio represented the rape of Ganymede; a work full of grace, with a beautiful field in the ground, which expresses the objects as if one saw them from the height of a mountain: here one sees the dog of Ganymede, which truly appears in the act and anxiety of wishing to fly to follow his master.

Among the things of Don Livio Odescalchi, was a young Cupid seen by the back, who makes an arch of a piece of wood leaning upon two books; and further on are two infants of half-figure, who are wrestling; the one laughs, and the other weeps, to represent fortunate and unhappy love.

All these paintings were in the gallery of the Duke of Orleans, and came from the same Odescalchi; and there was also another, which being in every respect resembling one I am going presently to describe, I shall now omit to speak of it, saying only, that it represented Venus with Mercury, who is teaching Cupid to read.

The King of France possessed another painting, representing the marriage of Saint Catherine, of little more than natural half-figure, with Saint Sebastian, and with the martyrdom of both these Saints figured at a distance. This painting has been always much admired, as one might know by so many copies which are done of it, and some by the most famous painters. This,

with two others, of which I have to speak, were painted by the Cardinal Anthony Barberini to Cardinal Mazarine, and has the peculiarity of being painted in distemper on canvas, with figures of four palms in height. Both are symbolical or poetical subjects, the one representing Virtue, and the other Vice. In the first is figured Virtue sitting and armed; and by her side is another figure, which represents conjunctively the four Cardinal Virtues, with their symbols, the bridle, sword, flags of lions, and five serpents entwined in the hair. At the opposite part is another figure, which with a compass in one hand measures a globe, and with the other directed to heaven represents the Sciences; that is, the knowledge of things celestial and terrestrial. There are four figures flying above, one of which is Victory, who meets Virtue; and the other is Fame, who makes them known. All the heads are wonderfully graceful, and not less so are the motions of the figures. Of this same painting is found a second, not finished, in the gallery of Prince Doria at Rome. The companion of this represents a vicious man tormented by his passions, carried by pleasure, enchained by habit, and stung by remorse of conscience\*.

There was also some another occasion painting, where Correggio repeated the two figures of Science and Virtue of the last painting which I have described, and in the middle a shield of

\* These two paintings were engraved by Picard the Roman, and give full and true ideas of the original.

arms with some stars; but then he made upon it a kind of field; though here one knows that which had been painted under. This painting was sold to a merchant at Berlin, to which place it was conveyed.

I have heard that in the aforesaid gallery of the Duke of Orleans, there is another little painting assuredly of Correggio; which had served for the sign of an inn, and in which is painted a Muleteer with his Mules.

The first work which this great man painted at Parma, was the Cupola of the Church of Saint John, of the Benedictine Fathers, and the four pedestals, as also the tribune upon the great altar. The cupola has no sky-light, or any window at the sides. In the middle is Christ in his glory, suspended in air, with the twelve Apostles under, seated upon the clouds. These are naked, and in a style of greatness which surpasses every imagination; and nevertheless the forms are beautiful, and served as models to the Carracci's, and particularly to Lewis, in whose works one knows that he proposed to imitate it. Whoever examines this painting with attention, will be induced to believe that Correggio had seen the works of Michael Angelo.

In the lunettes he represented the four Evangelists, with the four Doctors of the Church; and in that work it appears, that he had wished to follow a style similar to that of Raphael, which one sees in the simplicity of the dresses, and in the postures and actions; because the same imitated

the Socrates of the School of Athens, and an auditor of the Predication of Saint Paul in the Areopagus, who are in one of the tapestries of Raphael. Whoever would wish to be convinced of it, and cannot see the painting, may find it by the print engraved by Giovannini. A Saint John painted in fresco, by Correggio, upon the door of the vestry of the same church, appears much more of the style of Raphael; above all in the character of the head; which, if it were found upon a piece of wall, without knowing who did it, one would take it for a work of Raphael, rather than Correggio.

The Tribune painted by Correggio was demolished by the Monks to enlarge the Choir; but Hannibal Caracci being then at Parma, these Monks made him copy the whole with the same measure; and the Tribune being re-built, they got them copied again by Cesar Aretusi. The copies of the Caracci's were bought by the Pharnesian house, and are now in the Museum of Capodimonte at Naples. The principal group which represents the Madonna crowned by Jesus Christ, was cut off from that building, and is preserved in the library of the Duke of Parma.

Other separate pieces passed through the hands of different individuals, and there are three of them at Rome, in the house of the Marquis Rondanini; which astonish every one who views them near, and considers with what excellence and facility they are executed. This work, according to Ruta, was finished in the year one thousand five hundred and twenty-two.

In the same church are two admirable paintings of Correggio, which are at the two sides of the Fifth Chapel, at the right-hand. That at the left, which is towards the altar, represents the martyrdom of Saint Placido, and of Saint Flavia, with other Saints. Although the whole of the painting is most beautiful, yet that which claims particular attention is the head of the Saint, who, in the mean time that the executioner pierces her breast with a pike, looks so lovelily to heaven, that she appears to care little of the martyrdom. In the opposite painting is Jesus Christ dead, with the senseless Mother supported by Saint John: here one sees that she suffers all the pangs of death; and the Magdalen in tears at the feet of our Lord, has the most beautiful expression that ever can be seen. These two paintings are on thick canvases, and are of a most beautiful colouring, much impaired, of great force, and appear done after the cupola, from whence they are of a more delicate style, although not so finished as the other works of Correggio existing in Parma.

Nevertheless Hannibal Caracci made a great account of the last of these two paintings; because of all that he did of this subject he always took the same invention; and it appears that generally he applied himself more to the style of that work, than to the most sublime that Correggio used in others. It is evident that he did it because this was more easy to imitate; but it is a little feeble, and dark.



In the church of the Fathers Rocchettini, in the first chapel, entering on the left hand, is the painting of the altar, done on wood by Correggio in the most beautiful and finished style. It represents the flight into Egypt; and as the Virgin has a basin in her hand, it is known in the painting for the Madonna of the Basin. Correggio used to employ poetical ideas as well in sacred subjects, as in the profane, from whence he made a figure, but not of an angel, who pours water from a vase into the cup, or be it basin, which the Madonna holds in her hand. It appears that in this manner he wished to personify the fountain, after the manner which the ancients figured the fountains and floods; but, however, for this he did not represent a nymph, or any profane things. In the last stage of the painting, and in the place most remote, is an angel, in the act of tying an ass, with such expression and grace, that perhaps it is too much for such an action\*.

In the church of the Annunciation of the same city, on entering it at the left side, one sees painted in fresco, the Mystery of the Incarnation; but it is very ill treated; by reason, that finding it painted in another place where it became demolished, it was removed to where it now is: in similar cases it always happens, that with the new humidity, and with the salts of the

\* This wonderful painting was ruined thirteen years ago, by a young Spanish painter, who, obtaining permission to copy it, gave it so barbarous a wash, that he scarcely left any colour upon the wall.

gement, is formed upon a painting in fresco a kind of tartar which spreads over it, and makes it appear discoloured.

In the church of *Madonna dell'a Scala* is a painting of Correggio, in fresco, of the Madonna and the child in her arms, of half figure, but very much smoked, and almost ruined.

The celebrated painting of Correggio, which is now admired in the Academy of Parma, was in the church of Saint Anthony of the Fire. The eulogy which Hannibal Caracci gives it, and which one may read in a letter printed among the *Pittoriche*, and published by Monsignor Bottari, ought to be sufficient, being of a painter so intelligent; but he who has seen that painting, will feel such impression from it, as not to be able to speak of it but with particular affection. This painting, therefore, like many others, was done for the devotion of one, who wished to have various Saints together without forming a history, or particular subject. One ought not, however, to accuse Painters and Amateurs, of Anachronism, from seeing paintings which represent kinds of spiritual visions, with which mixedly are united various Saints, for whom, him who orders the work has particular devotion. From whence in this painting, is represented with the highest excellence, the Blessed Virgin and Child; by the side, Saint Jerom with a book, as if he would present to Je us his writings; and between this Saint and the Child, is an Angel, in the act of pointing out, in the said book some passage of scripture, and speaks with Saint

Jerom in a smiling air. The figure of this Doctor is naked, except a kind of violet fash, and a piece of red cloth, which covers him a little; but the shoulders are left uncovered, and the right arm and leg: all this is most beautiful, and designed with perfect anatomical knowledge, and of wonderful colouring. At the part opposite is the Magdalen, who with the right-hand takes the left-foot of the child, in the act of kissing it, and, turning the face as wishing to caress it, has such grace as Correggio alone was capable of imagining. Beyond the Magdalen, is an angel smelling a vase, to signify the offer of an unguent of the Magdalen to Christ. Among the beautiful paintings of Correggio, this is almost the most beautiful, and one can only compare to it the little Magdalen, and the famous Night, of which I shall treat in their places. With regard to the style in which this painting is executed, it is to be known that it is so well impasted, and has a richness of colour which is not to be seen in any other, and at the same time it is done with such clearness as is very difficult to preserve in using so much colour; but the most difficulty in this kind of painting, thus impasted, is the variety of the tints, and in seeing that the colours appear as if not laid on by the pencil, but as if they had been infused together after the manner of wax upon a fire. Although the whole of this painting is wonderful, yet the head of the Magdalen exceeds in beauty all the rest, and one might say that he who has not seen it, does not know to what the art of painting ca

arrive; because in that is found the expression, and the precision of Raphael; the tints of Titian; the inpasting of Giorgione; that truth and characteristic exactness which one sees in the little variety of the forms, and of the tints of the portraits of Vandyke; the grandeur of Guido, and the gayness of Paolo Veronese: all however is presented to the sight with such tenderness and delicacy as the great Correggio alone could possess; as no other has ever been able to imitate him, or even to copy him; because the copies which the most able painters have made of this painting are, when compared to the original, like fire in comparison to the sun.

The cupola of the Cathedral of Parma, in which Correggio represented the Assumption of our Lady, is the most beautiful of all the cupolas that have been painted before or after him; but now it is so smoked, and spoiled, that one can scarcely retrace its excellence. Its figure is octagonal, and the angles are diminished according as they arise. It is shut up without a lantern, and in its place is painted with violent foreshortening, Jesus Christ who comes to meet his mother. Below are many Saints, in wonderful foreshortening; from whence comes the principal group of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary carried by many angels, some sustaining the robes, and others sounding various instruments. All that takes but the half of the superior of the cupola. In the inferior there are windows almost circular; and for that reason, Correggio feigned there a kind of sock, which is represented as at a

distance, and leaves room for the Apostles between the windows, some single, and others two together; and notwithstanding some fall upon the same line of the angles, they are still so well disposed, and foreshortened, that they never offend the sight, and appear planted vertically upon the cornice. Upon the said sock are disposed two youths in the style of angels, but without wings, lighting torches, and others are with censers and vases; from whence these unite the inferior compositions with the superior, because they are of a lesser proportion than the Apostles and the Madonna; the whole together form an admirable variety of grandeur and lightness. In the four angles, or lunettes, he figured four great niches, which contribute much to the good effect; because, supposing that the light comes from the aperture above, and that they leave the superior part of the said niches obscure, it illuminates to the contrary the figures, forming a contrast with the shade of the field.

In these four angles, Correggio painted four holy patrons of the city. Saint Thomas, Saint Ilarius, Saint Bernard, and Saint John the Baptist, seated upon clouds, and accompanied by angel, who support and play with their attributes. In all this work, and particularly in the lunettes, is all the grace imaginable, and the greatest knowledge of clear obscure; and if one considers that the whole is painted in fresco, the wonder will more increase. We know that Correggio made in relief all the models of the figures which he painted in that cupola, in which assisted his

friend Begarelli; the only means by which he could have executed that work with the perfection he did; and which was his last; and characterised more that professor than he had ever been before.

Modena once possessed treasures of Correggio, but they were sent to Dresden when the late Duke of Modena sold all the best paintings of his gallery to Augustus the third King of Poland, who bought one hundred paintings at the price of one hundred and thirty thousand zecchini, which were coined on purpose at Venice.

Among these paintings six were of Correggio. Five are the most beautiful he ever did; and the sixth, which is the inferior one, is also very precious, because it shews in what state painting was when that professor came to the world. It is a large piece, with figures of natural size, which represent the Madonna with the Child seated upon a kind of throne, in the middle of a body of architecture of the Ionic order, of a character sufficiently grand, and he feigned an arch behind the Virgin, with a few heads of infants, and two intire, representing Angels, but without wings. At one part are Saint John the Baptist, and Saint Catherine, and at the other Saint Francis, and Saint Anthony of Padua. This work is well preserved, and is of much force; and although it has a little of harshness in the contours, it is notwithstanding smooth, and well painted in the interior parts of the figures. The colouring is true, and rich; of a style between that of Peruginus, and Leonardo da Vinci; and in particular

the head of the Virgin approaches much the style and character of the last, especially in the cheeks and in the smiling countenance. The folds appear something as if done by Mantegna; that is in the mode of encircling the member; but they are less dry and more grand. The composition is done with all the good reasonings of variety and contrast. In short, if Correggio had more maintained that style, it would have been sufficient for him to have equalled in merit either Ghirlandajo, Bellino, Mantegna, or Perugino; but he obscured it all with the new taste with which he perfected the art.

It appears that Correggio abandoned not his first dry style by degrees; but that in an instant he advanced to perfection. I do not know for certain from whence that arose, but I will give my conjectures upon the same.

In the same collection is a portrait of half figure, painted on wood, of a man who holds in his hand a book. Whilst he was at Modena this portrait was known for the Physician of Correggio. The colouring and impasting are beautiful enough; but I incline to believe, that it was painted at the same time of the Cupola of Saint John, when the Author had not yet finished all the study which he did afterwards in the minor forms, and in the variety of tints. To give an idea of the style of that painting, I would compare it to that of Giorgione; but more pallid, and of inferior colouring, although equally impasted, and a little more clear.

The third painting, which is in Saxony, is

known by the name of Saint George, and shows the great application of Correggio, and his study always to advance in the art. This work, according to the account of Vasari, was made for the Brethren of Saint Peter the Martyr, at Modena, and had a body of architecture painted on the wall around it, as is seen by the original design in the possession of Monsieur Mariette at Paris. This is a work of extraordinary finish, of great softness, excellently well impasted, and in the whole is very pleasing. The composition, however, is a little interrupted; the figures have most beautiful movements; and the design is of a most grand character; the drapery is much studied, and all is executed with great attention. One knows that Correggio took here all his parts from Nature, and formed them in small models, from whence he copied the little parts, which he chose for the clear obscure, as one sees more particularly in the Children who play with the helmet of Saint George; because the Saints, forming their shade, have all those accidents of light, which could only be observed by the models, it not being possible that children could sit all the time that was necessary for such observations; from whence I am confirmed in the opinion, that before Correggio executed this work he applied himself to modelling. In this painting is the Virgin seated on a kind of throne, or pedestal, sustained by two golden Children; and at the sides are the four Saints, George, John the Baptist, Jeminian, and Peter the Martyr. This last is in the act of interceding for the devout. St.



Jeminian presents the Child a Model of a Church, supported by a Child of divine beauty. The Child Jesus shows pleased at the present, by extending his arms to receive it. The grace and sweetness with which this Child is conceived, designed, and painted, cannot be expressed. More in the foreground of the painting, is the young Saint John the Baptist, of seventeen or eighteen years old, which I suppose was done by Correggio to give more grace to the composition, by contrasting the characters of the figures. That of Saint John is designed with wonderful knowledge of nudity. The anatomy is well studied, and expressed with the singular grace of Correggio. He has the head turned to the people, pointing with the right-hand to Jesus Christ; and it appears that he says, *Ecce Agnus Dei*. A little forwarder, and half turning his shoulders, is Saint George, of the most beautiful and grand style that one can imagine in an heroical character. In the foreground is a Child, who holds in his hand the Sword of the Saint, and one does not see the points of his toes, supposing them hid by the Table of the Altar.

The other Painting which succeeds to that, bears the name of Saint Sebastian; and although the aforesaid of Saint George is so astonishing, many intelligent persons find in the composition of this something preferable, which approaches more the modern style. Certainly, few works of Correggio (except the famous Night) have so much effect as that. It is probable that it was done for some religious offering of the city of Mo-

dena, in the time of the plague; but we know not from what Church it was taken, by some one of the Dukes, to put it into his gallery. We know only that it was there much before that of Saint George. It represents the Madonna in glory among the Clouds, with the Child in her arms brightened by the beams of the Sun, and various Angels. On the ground are Saint Jeminian, Saint Roque, and Saint Sebastian. The effect of that painting is admirable, and shows to what degree Correggio possessed the art of ~~clear~~-obscure, and the distribution of colours. The first thing which surprises one in viewing it, is the light of the Glory, which effectively appears a Sun; and above all it is only of one colour, which is a rather clear yellow, and the border of the Painting is more dark. It appears that the Madonna and Child come forth from the body of light, as if it were an obscure ground. The Madonna is dressed in rose colour, very vivid, as if covered with lacre, with a mantle of dark blue. The flesh of the Mother and Child have but little degree of light, which adds infinitely to the good effect, because it maintains the group in its true distance. The two Angels at the side are opposed to the clear field with less force, and are sitting upon rather dark clouds, which augments more their grace, and that of the other various Angels which are among them. One of the aforesaid Angels of the Throne appears to be speaking with Saint Roque, and the other with Saint Sebastian, indicating to them that it was necessary to have re-

course to Jesus, who gives signs with his hand to accept the supplication.

Under that celestial group is a little hillock, whose colour unites with that of the clouds, which leaves but a small aperture by which one discovers a little of the country. At the left hand over Saint Roque, the obscurity of the clouds and the mountain make a field to the figures below, which is in the first place Saint Jeminian, who in a golden pluvial lined with a very beautiful green, and in a white alb, forms the principal point of the light; but since that and the other lights are small, they advance the objects without prejudice to the mass of clare of the glorious group.

On the other side one sees Saint Sebastian on foot, tied to a tree, in the act of interceding for the infected: he is naked even to the girdle, and the tints wonderfully attach the inferior parts to the superior of the composition: At the side of Saint Jeminian, is Saint Roque leaning the right arm and head upon the mountain, as if abandoned and infected by the plague. At the part which is above that Saint the clouds make a shade, but all with reflective light, as corresponds to each shade in the open field. This accident, wonderfully aids the repose of the sight, and the variety: contrasting with Saint Sebastian, who is illuminated in the breast and shoulders, whilst Saint Roque is illuminated only in the thighs, and in that manner it is relieved from a disagreeable uniformity. At the feet of Saint Jeminian is a girl of twelve or thirteen years of age, who holds

in her hand a little edifice with a tower, like a little church, representing, as some think, the city of Modena, of which that Saint is the patron. This figure has all the grace of Correggio. It is remarkable that all the Angels of this painting are without wings \*. In this same gallery is the celebrated painting of the Penitent Magdalen; in height little more than a palm; and in length less than a palm and an half. This sole image contains all the beauty which can be imagined in painting, for the diligence with which it is executed, the imparting of the colours, the softness, grace, and knowledge in the clear obscure. Correggio figured the whole obscure, and shaded, except the naked part of the Saint. The head is of half tint, but illuminated by the reflection which comes from the arm, and a book which he is reading. The field, although obscure, is equally beautiful, and seems a spacious place, such as the bottom of a grotto, and of a valley, with trees and verdure. In short, if the other paintings of Correggio are excellent, this is wonderfully so. The hair of the Saint, besides the softness with which it is done, by appearing as if the colours were melted to make it, gives so perfect an idea of what it is, as if the hairs were painted one by one, and have even the lustre of natural hair. In the sale, this painting was valued at twenty-seven thousand Roman scudi.

\* This painting had suffered & the damage, which was augmented in carrying it from Modena to Dresden; but, with the great care that they had to preserve the fragments, it was excellently repaired by Signor Sedriz, painter to King Augustus.

The sixth and last painting, which the King of Poland bought, is the most celebrated of all, known to the world by the name of *la Nöte di Correggio*, and represents the Birth of our Lord. This work was done by Correggio for Alberto Pratonieri, as appears by the agreement which he made in 1522, when he finished the Cupola of Saint John at Parma; but this painting was not finished until the year 1527. Perhaps this delay served him to study more the effect of clare obscure, wishing to make the light come solely from the child; a thing which, until then, only Raphael had imagined; nor should I be surprised if, with this study, and by modelling all his compositions, Correggio then found his beautiful clare obscure, and that wonderful foreshortening which he displayed in the celebrated Cupola in the Cathedral, which was his last and most glorious work.

This painting, the *Night*, is in the aforesaid gallery of Dresden, and very well preserved; and is one of those paintings which moves the heart of him who views it, whether he be intelligent or ignorant in the art, but much more that of the first. The imitation of Truth is executed with such artifice, that it loses every idea of itself, art is there so well hid, that it appears done with the greatest facility. The composition is simple, but hides the most singular art, by showing in a very small space, a field sufficiently great, with a distance that appears truly as if one saw a melancholy and miserable place, but ornamented with a horizon where one sees the dawn of the day, which enlivens all the rest. At a distance are

some shepherds, which one scarcely distinguishes, and among them and the Madonna is Saint Joseph, in the act of leading the Ass, whose figure enlarges the place, showing the distance that there is between that and the Virgin, and of the other parts; even to the shepherds. It appears at first sight, that the situation of the Virgin might have been better studied, because the head is inclined towards the child, in a manner that one cannot see all the face; but considering it better, one knows that ~~it~~ was not possible to make one part better, without taking much from the grace. Correggio inclined that head, in order that the light which comes from below, should not produce a shade in the parts above, which would have injured the beauty of the face. The child is also placed with particular care, because it is taken obliquely, in a manner that one can scarcely see the face, although one sees the hands and the feet; and these I believe were made by Correggio, purposely to avoid expressing the natural form of children just born, which is not very pleasing, because we are not used to see it; and this ought to serve as an example, to avoid that which is not beautiful in Nature, rather than to alter the Truth; making beautiful that which is not so in itself. Perhaps for the same reason he almost hid the face of an old shepherd, who is in the first stage, placing him before another who is more youthful and beautiful, and who with a motion full of joy, appears to speak of this success to the old man. A Shepherdess who has two turtles in a little basket, shows that one never tires

to let the young Jesus, and that she did not know how to depart; and covered her face with her hand to hide herself from his splendor. In the upper part of the painting, opposite to the Madonna, is a Glory with Angels illuminated equal to the child; where Correggio placed the second light, but not so perfect as that of the Madonna, and made the shade more soft, as if it were reflected, or comprised in a kind of mass of light, perhaps to make known that they are spirits. The beauty, grace, and delicacy of that painting are admirable, and executed in different styles, according as it agrees to each of them.

In the collection of the paintings of Count Bruhl, who was prime minister to the aforesaid Augustus III. King of Poland, is a little painting of something more than one palm in height and a little less in width, which represents the nuptials of Saint Catherine. It is painted on canvass upon board, and on the back there is an inscription in ancient character, *Laus Dei. Per Donna Metilde d'Este. Antonio Tico da Correggio fecit il presente quadro per sua devotione anno 1511*. If this inscription be genuine, this must have been one of the first works of his second style. It is certain that it is a most beautiful painting.

Among the paintings which were of the Duke of Parma, and which are now at *Capo di Monte* at Naples, one is entirely similar to the aforesaid, nor can one doubt but both are of Correggio; because among the infinite copies which different great painters have taken of it, and among others

Hannibal Caracci, there is no one which approaches the original. This ought to have been much esteemed even from the time it was finished, because it was engraved by Hugh da Carpi, who was almost contemporary with Correggio.

Returning to the Gallery of Saxony, there is also a painting of the Blessed Virgin, of half figure, with the child sleeping in her arms, which was engraved by the celebrated Edelinck, who believed it to be of Correggio; but we know for certain that it is of Sebastian Ricci the Venetian, who with a view of imposture made it pass for a work of Correggio, by imitating his manner, and by giving it a certain cast of antiquity. But by examining it attentively, even the print discovers the imposture; because in place of grace there is only affectation, and in the clear obscure only falsification.

There is likewise another painting in the said gallery which is asserted to be of Correggio, by him who engraved it at Rome. It represents the Madonna and Child sitting at the foot of a palm tree, and an angel in air: it is known by the name of the *Zingarella* of Correggio. Cardinal Alexander Albani made a present of it to King Augustus. Notwithstanding that, there are people who doubt its being original, and we know for certain there is another on the same subject, assuredly of Correggio, and which came from the gallery of Parma to Capo di Monte; but having been very ill treated, it was repainted by a modern hand; so that one may say it no longer



exists, because we no more behold in it any thing of Correggio\*.

Also at Florence are found some works of Correggio. The largest is preserved in the palace of Pitti, and appears to have served for an altar piece. It is on wood; and the figures are almost of natural size. There is the Madonna, and Child in her arms, who has a globe of the world in his hand; and Saint Christopher in the act of receiving him upon his shoulders.

At the feet of the Madonna is Saint John the Baptist, and opposite to Saint Christopher is Saint Michael. This painting has always passed as a work of Correggio: but it is certain that it is of a particular style, and little resembles the beautiful works of that famous author; although in the composition it partakes something of his style. If any one would wish to maintain that this is a work of Correggio, he would be obliged to confess, that it is not a complete work, because there are many harsh things in it, and no delicacy. To me nevertheless it appears, that it is a finished work, because we see in it certain things which painters use only in finishing their paintings; from whence one might conjecture,

\* A Parmazan Ex-Jesuit, in the act of the extinction of his order, saved a painting of the same subject, and sold it afterwards to Prince Chigi of Rome. It is undoubtedly an original of Correggio as well as that of Capo di Monte. The field has suffered much; and has also been retouched, particularly in the drapery. The head of the Madonna, the foot, and the child, which are well described, are painted so divinely, that perhaps the world does not produce again any thing so beautiful.

that Correggio had left that work imperfect, and that some other painter finished it; of, if he finished it himself, he sought to imitate the Venetian school. There are many persons who absolutely deny it to be a painting of Correggio: however, I do not hazard to determine who else could have made so many beautiful things as it contains.

In the same gallery is a beautiful head painted on wood; and although it is only a first sketch, it is nevertheless so beautifully ~~expressed~~ and coloured, as to give every delight. This head is in every respect similar to the other of that girl who holds in her hand a model of a church at the feet of Saint Geminian, of the aforesaid painting of Saint Sebastian which is at Dresden.

The Grand Duke of Tuscany possesses also another painting on canvas, five palms in height, representing the Madonna on her knees with the Child just born lying on the ground upon a corner of the mantle, without any other figure. This is not the most beautiful of the works of Correggio, because the composition and drapery are but little studied. The head and the hands of the Madonna are painted wonderfully; but with less force than the other classical works of our author.

In Rome, in the gallery of the house of Colonna, is preserved a painting of Correggio on wood, which represents an *Ecc Homo*, with the Virgin who faints behind a Soldier, and at a distance is Pilate; all half figures. This painting belonged to Count Prati of Parma, and appears rather of

the second style of Correggio than of his highest and most finished style; but nevertheless it is most beautiful, of a good character of design, singularly impassioned, and of good colouring. Austin Caracci engraved it.

In the palace of Prince Doria Panphily at Rome, among other excellent paintings, is preserved one of Correggio not complete, painted in distemper upon canvass, whose composition is Heroical Virtue crowned by Glory, as I have described when treating of the paintings of France. If this painting is not to be compared to the highest perfection of the other most excellent works in oil of Correggio, it shews, at least, his great knowledge and merit, and his quickness in painting; and it shews also that his grace and excellence arise not from the length of time which he employed in his works, nor in the repeated impassioning of the colours, but in the constant system of having always present the effects of truth; because although one sees in that painting, that in some parts it is only sketched with white and black rather lightly, yet it has all the grace of things finished, and with all the knowledge they require. In other parts where there is a little of colour, one sees the idea of truth, and above all the great knowledge of the foreshortenings is surprising, especially in those parts where any muscle or flesh is eminent; because then it goes gradually hiding the other successive parts, and clearing the labyrinth of the forms, which is a thing very difficult; from whence, if there are other paintings more beau-

tiful and finished, in no one like that does one see better the wonderful merit of Correggio.

The house of Barberini anciently possessed a small painting, representing that passage in the Evangelist Saint Mark, which says, "And there followed him a certain young man, having a linen cloth, cast about his naked body; and the young men laid hold on him; and he left the linen cloth, and fled from them naked." They say that this painting went from one hand to another, and at last remained in England; but lately has been seen in Rome another similar; in possession of an Englishman. The only difference which appears between them is, that the last is painted on canvas, and appears the study and sketch of the other, because here one discovers some corrections; a thing which is rare in the paintings of Correggio. Nevertheless the figure of the youth is very well finished, and is beautifully impasted and coloured, and above all is singular in the expression and the manner in which he endeavoured to extricate himself from his clothes. The Soldier who wishes to arrest him seizes the clothes with his right hand, and with the left makes a sign more to call him than to arrest him, and it appears that he would wish to persuade him friendly not to fly: this expression explains the character of Correggio, led always by the actions least harsh and violent. From afar one sees the arrest of Christ in the act when Judas kisses him, and St. Peter who cuts off the ear of Malchus. The perspective and clare obscure of this painting are of the best

style of Correggio; but that which one here knows clearly to be the most singular is, that he had present the figure of the eldest son of Laocoon when he made that of the youth; because the head and all the characters of his person resemble him; only the form is more grand, according to the style of Correggio.

In Saint Louis of the French in Rome, there is a little painting of one palm and an half, which, they say, is of Correggio; and represents the Madonna of half figure, and the child entire, Saint Joseph, and two Angels. To me this appears a work of Julius Cesar Procaccini.

A few years ago was found at Rome, in the possession of a dealer in paintings, one which represented the Madonna and Child, and with a little Angel, very like one which was engraved by Spier, with the sole difference that this is round, and the other was a square long. This painting was covered with a thick varnish which much obscured and hid the beauty of the painting: for that reason it was sold at a vile price to one Casanova, a Venetian, who cleaned it very well, but not without injuring that flower of the colours most adherent to the varnish. The possessor carried that painting for sale to Dresden, where probably it is now to be found.

The King of Spain possesses two small paintings of Correggio. The first represents Jesus Christ praying in the garden, with an Angel on high, who, with the left hand, points to him the cross, and the crown of thorns, which are in shade upon the ground, and one scarcely discovers

them; and with the right shews, in graceful foreshortening, the Heavens, as if he said it to be the will of the Father that he should accept the passions: in fact, one sees that our Lord, with open arms, shews to accept it. The most singular part of this piece, besides the excellent execution of the painting, is the style with which is managed the clare obscure; because he figured there that Christ received the light from Heaven, and to the contrary the Angel from Christ. At a distance, and in the lowest place, ~~are~~ three Disciples in the most beautiful and graceful attitudes, and further on is the crowd of the ministers of the arrest. They relate that Correggio gave that painting to his apothecary for four crowns, which he was indebted to him for medicine; and that a little after it was sold for five hundred; and finally Count Pyrrus Visconti sold it to the Marquis of Camarena, governor of Milan, for seven hundred and fifty gold doubloons, who bought it in commission for Philip IV. It is preserved at present in the Royal Palace at Madrid, with the esteem that it merits; and it is no ways injured, as some have falsely supposed.

The second painting represents the Madonna who dresses the Child; a work of a style less complete, but nevertheless sufficiently beautiful, wonderfully impasted, and of admirable delicacy. At a distance is Saint Joseph, planing a board, so well degraded in the contours, that it shews plainly Correggio was a very great master in the knowledge of that part of painting which they call *aerial perspective*; because the things which he

wished to represent as seen at a distance, he has not only ~~shaded~~ lighter than the painters do at present, but he has diminished also the lights, lightened the contours, and confused the forms by means of the distance; and all without ever departing from the limits of truth.

The Duke of Alva has a painting of Correggio, of figures little less than natural, painted on canvass, and represents Mercury, who teaches Cupid to read in the presence of Venus. This last figure ~~has the~~ peculiarity of having wings, and a bow in the left hand: it is beautiful, and one plainly discovers that Correggio, in executing it, had present the Apollo of the Villa of Medici, which is now at Florence. The Cupid expresses all the innocence of his age: the hair is rich and wonderfully executed; it appears that one sees the epidermis; and it is finished without appearing dry. His little wings are like those of nestling birds, who still leave the skin visible, and the quills of the feathers. Whenever Correggio painted wings, he attached them in the same manner as in this painting, placing them immediately behind the shoulders, in a manner that they united so well with the flesh, that they effectively appeared as a member united with the superior part of the acromion; from whence the deceased Duke, who was the possessor of that painting, was right in telling me that the wings of that Cupid were so well situated, that if it were possible that a child could be born with wings, he could not have them in any other manner.

Generally other painters who make wings, at-

tach them so carelessly, that they appear truly fictitious. Mercury is represented as a youth who has not yet done growing, and of an innocent character. That painting is undoubtedly original; not only because it discovers the sovereign excellence of Correggio, but also for a correction sufficiently visible in the arm of Mercury, that was originally covered with a blue cloth; and one distinguishes it, as the colour appears through that which was afterwards laid over it. I mention this circumstance because there exists another similar in France, which has not this correction, and might be a copy, or a second. This of the Duke of Alva was bought by one of his ancestors at London, together with an assortment of the famous Arazzi of Raphael, at the sale of the furniture of the unhappy Charles I. after he was beheaded.

In the grand vestry of the Escorial, is preserved a painting on canvass, of figures three palms in height, and represents Christ with the Magdalen, when he says to her, *Noli me tangere*. This is a painting of the same style of that of the Madonna and Child, which is at Florence, and of which I have already given the description.



## REFLECTIONS

UPON THE

EXCELLENCE OF CORREGGIO.

IMITATION, which is the greatest difficulty of the art, having been conquered by some able professors, such as Masaccio, John Bellino, and Andrew Mantegna, who found the mode of expressing the different plains, foreshortenings, and back grounds; those who came after, such as Leonardo da Vinci, Peter Peruginus, Ghirlandajo, and Father Bartholomew of Saint Mark, found less obstacles. The two first added a certain grace, the third a little more knowledge in the composition, and the last a majesty and artifice in the clear obscure and drapery, which was till then unknown. But since nothing in this world is invented and perfected at the same time, the aforesaid artists could not follow that ease (the sure counterlight of perfection in the art), to which afterwards arrived in different degrees Michael Angelo, Titian, Giorgione, and the divine Raphael, who in himself alone re-united all the merits which his predecessors had possessed in separate parts, and reduced painting to the highest degree

of perfection under the appearance of ease. It does great honour to mankind, that with such a genius and such vile materials as simple earths, discoloured and extended upon a plain surface, he could know how to imitate all the works of the Creator, and the effects and passions of mankind.

But although painting was arrived to a degree so eminent, by the terrible forms of Michael Angelo, by the true tones of the colouring of Titian, and by the perfect expression and natural grace of Raphael, it wanted notwithstanding, always something, that is to say, a complex of different excellencies, which is the extreme of human perfection. This complex is in Correggio, who to grandeur and truth united a certain elegance, which generally bears the name of taste, and which signifies the proper and determinate character of things, excluding all the indifferent parts, such as the insipid and useless.

Correggio was the first who painted with the view of delighting the sight and the souls of spectators, and directed all the parts of painting to this end. However, as every painter endeavours in his works to content himself, and to imprint in it his genius, one might conjecture, that Correggio possessed very delicate sensibility, a tender and affectionate heart, and a decisive aversion to things rough and harsh; so that if others had painted to satisfy their minds, he laboured for the satisfaction of his heart, and according to his own sensations; from whence he became in the whole the painter of the Graces. No

one, either before or after, has arrived like him to the art of the touch of the pencil; but above all, he has succeeded wonderfully in the knowledge of clare obscure, and in giving relief to things, having easily found the just medium between the powerful style and the terrible, or the pleasing and weak; among the spacious and plain, and little relieved style, and that which contracts too much the lights, and degenerates into minutiae. Finally, none knew like him how to unite light and shade. He understood the degradations of these, and their reflections in the shade, without affectation, because he employed them in a manner, as if the bodies had been mirrors.

The inventions of Correggio are ingenious and beautiful, and often poetical, and his compositions are always founded on truth, and the good effect of clare obscure, so that from the first lines he began to introduce it with the colours, thinking not only of the imitation of truth, but of the distribution of all the parts which ought to enter into his works. To this end, I believe, he painted his sketches in colours, holding as a principal view the appearance which a painting makes at first sight, because the other parts of painting can convince, but not persuade one of the goodness of a work, when it does not please. It appears that he did not regard so much certain rules, which have so much credit in the modern schools, although he punctually observed all that which respects the contraposition, and the contrast of the figures and their members; so it appears, that continued variety was his fundamental

rule, which he observed not in these and other parts, but in the whole.

With regard to the contrast and the variety of the directions of the members, one sees by his most perfect works, that always when he could, he gave to these members a little foreshortening, and seldom made his surfaces parallel; which gives a wonderful effect to all his compositions.

It is necessary however to confess, that sometimes (although seldom) searching with too much earnestness the variety of the situations, particularly that of the hands, gave him a certain affectation of grace which does not appear natural; a defect which Raphael always avoided.

Some have taxed Correggio with little exactness of design; which is, rigorously speaking, a false accusation.

It is however true that he did not choose the objects in forms so simple as the ancients, nor the muscles so marked as Michael Angelo, nor made pomp of the knowledge of nudity, like the Florentine School. Except that, he designed most correctly the objects he had to represent, nor in any of his original works does one find any thing which one might call incorrect.

Above all, it will be sufficient to eternalize his glory, that the Caraccis, and particularly Hannibal and Lewis, formed their style of design upon that of Correggio, as one might see by all the works that they did before they came to Rome.

It appears as if Correggio had considered all the forms of nature, which were not altered by

artifice, as if they were composed of curved, concave, and convex lines, and that they could vary only in their size or proportions; so that he avoided all that which was angular, and in consequence, minutiae and dryness, in which error generally fell the painters of the anterior schools. Avoiding, therefore straight lines, he chose almost always the curved or serpentine, like the letter S; and with that he thought to give greater grace; having without doubt observed, that the difference between the dry and beautiful style of the ancients is principally because the contours and the forms of the first are composed of straight, and some curved and convex lines, whilst the second is solely varied with curves: nor did the ancients do this from caprice, or from predilection of taste, but from the precise imitation of truth, and the knowledge of anatomy and the structure of the human body, where the obliqueness of the muscles, and the variety of their positions upon the tortuosity of the bone, form that alternative of curve: and since flesh and muscular bodies have always more convex forms, and these larger in the concave, to the contrary the feeble have less convexity, and the greatest concavity; for that reason Correggio preferred the middle way, without ever departing by that from truth.

It is not easy to determine if the knowledge of clear obscure, and the imitation of truth in that part have conducted Correggio to the knowledge of the forms and contours, and of their interior; and if by any other way, or by the study of that

principal part of painting, he obtained that perfection which one admires in his works.

It is certain that, after Raphael, no one understood perspective better than him, which has so much contributed to the design of his naked figures, and that no one, except perhaps Michael Angelo, knew like Correggio the science of the forms, and construction of the human figure. Clare obscure is so inseparable from design, that the one cannot perfectly exist without the other; because, design being deprived of clare obscure can only represent a kind of section, parallel with the surface upon which one paints, nor will ever arrive to express the true form of things. Correggio knew how to unite these two qualities with so much perfection, that one sees them combined in his works the same as in nature; and it appears impossible that he had been able to attain this so egregiously without having much studied relief, and sculpture, because pure truth without the aforesaid studies would not be sufficient to teach a thing so difficult; and for that reason Michael Angelo modelled first in earth, or in wax, those figures which he had to paint; as he himself refers in a letter to Varchi: nor before him was there a painter who dared to use foreshortenings and contractions and extensions of the muscles, and of the forms of the centre to the circumference, as he did.

From whence, if, in modelling, Buonarroti taught this style, which is naturally his, it will not be surprising that the knowledge of beautiful contours, and the grand style of Correggio

arise from the same origin; that is, from the study of relief, and modelling his figures: it being known to us that he used the *plastica*.

Besides that part of clare obscure which regards the expression of the forms, Correggio was also superior to all other painters in the general clare obscure; that is, in the general disposal of lights and shades, because that same gradation which he used in one part, or in one figure, he used also in an entire piece, distributing the lights in such a manner that the first is only one; and the same may be said of the second, and the others. Thus is his shade all varied, but sometimes with force and sometimes with grandeur, and many times only by the quality of the colours of which they are composed. He managed the contrasts with softness, nor ever put the greatest clares in contraposition to the greatest obscures, without forming something which would take from their asperity, or placing them by the side of some greater shade. Besides that, he considered that all bodies are of such a nature, that they do not retain all the rays of light which they receive; and that they spread or reflect the major part at all sides, according to the figure or the surface; for which reason they ought necessarily to mix with the light shades which are in the mass of illuminated bodies.

Correggio wonderfully understood the aerial perspective of the clare obscure and colours, but without the attention of some very modern painters; nor fully understood the gradations of the tints. But he had besides observed, that if, in nature, shades lose their force in distance,

lights lose it much more; and that little things are the first to be confused. From whence he inferred, that the contours languish and are lost at a little distance, terminating in pure points, the last extremes of bodies which one cannot perfectly see. With regard to colours, he knew very well those which lose more or less their activity in the intermediate ambient. In short, he perfectly possessed that art by which painting delights and deceives the senses.

His colouring is most beautiful; but appears also more so from the perfect gradation of the tints, and that pleasing and diligent manner of impasting his paintings, which added to his simple colours a certain clearness to be found in Correggio alone: so that, in his works, one cannot determine whether he were most excellent or intelligent either in the forms, the colouring, clear or obscure, or in the manner of extending the colours; because whoever considers all that, will find that he was equally a master in all these parts, and that in all he had made the most profound reflections. What arduous study does it not require to possess an art so difficult, and to form a habit of working with so much excellence!

It is certain, that he who possesses in perfection the greatest number of the parts of painting will be found the most excellent; and it is also certain, that Raphael and Correggio are for that reason the two greatest painters; and these especially arrived to the accomplishment of expressing in one sole point all the apparent and



pleasing effects of nature. It is true, that Titian was so great a master in colouring, that, by his tints, he merited the first rank in that part; but he did not possess that perfect gradation, which expresses the most delicate and almost insensible forms; and which contributes much to the imitation of truth, and sometimes more than colouring itself: and by that we see that many works of Correggio done in fresco, with a tone of the tint low and pallid, can enchant by transporting the spectator from the idea of fiction to that of truth; which is the primary end every painter ought to aim at.

Correggio was the first who made drapery enter in the invention of composition; either in the effect of clare obscure, colouring, and of harmony, as for the direction and contrast. He took less care of each particular fold, than of the mass of the drapery; from whence he opened a new way of disposing well the drapery in large works: and in that he was very well imitated by Lanfranco and others.

I have said that Correggio unitedly possessed those various parts of painting which singly have made illustrious painters; as truth and grace made Raphael illustrious, cheerfulness Leonard, impassion Giorgione, and colouring Titian. I confess, however, that in each of these things separately, he was less excellent than them. He knew, notwithstanding, how to unite the whole as they are in nature, and to temperate, by his modest and soft genius, those which are very violent, and to combine them with his

philosophical understanding; so that whatever he knew how to express separately, he wished to see united; and he succeeded in it.

But however great I consider Correggio, I do not still think him greater than Raphael. It is well known that his paintings are more equal in the execution, and more exquisite; but with all that he did not possess in so high a degree of excellence as Raphael, the expressions of the affections of the mind, which is really that which gives the greatest nobleness to painting, and is equal to the impression which eloquence and poetry make on the minds of men.

Raphael therefore painted with more excellence the effects of the mind, and Correggio the effects of bodies. In viewing a painting of Raphael, one feels more than that which one sees; and in one of Correggio, the eye sees more than the mind can comprehend; and the senses remain suspended, and the heart enchanted. Correggio appears finally the painter of Grace. . . . If Raphael is any thing superior to Correggio, this is much more than all the others who came after him. Until his time, painting always gained: he completed it, and was the meridian of the art: from that point it always went declining, nor do we know how to be able to re-establish it; much less how to improve it; unless there appears some great genius who knows how to unite the beauties of the ancients, and those of Raphael, Correggio, and Titian, with the truth of nature. . . .

The knowledge which we have of the great

and interesting life of Correggio, is confined, confused and contradictory. Neither the literati, or painters, who have written the lives of Artists, have done him that justice which he merited. In the mean time, he was worthy that some one should have taken care to inform himself well of the circumstances of a man, to whom the noble art of painting owes so much. This negligence is not only an injustice to his memory, but a great loss to community; because there is nothing which stimulates geniuses so much as the histories of great men; and often by these means the vices of self-love and ambition, change their nature, and are converted into virtue. For this reason, it has appeared to me proper to examine, as well as I have been able, this phenomenon of the pictorial history, to remedy in some manner the injustice which has forgotten Correggio, by writing with too much prolixity the lives of infinite other painters, from which no instruction, utility, or delight, can arrive.

It is very useful that men live in the belief that merit is the origin of honour and fortune: by this means they are urged on to follow it. However, it is accidents which generally decide the fate of men; and the same virtue in different times and places produces different effects. Anthony Allegri was born in too confined a country, and was inclined by his talent and natural genius to love, and to the desire of knowledge, and contrary to luxury and vanity: he ought not, therefore, to have exposed himself to the great world; and if he had, his modesty would have

impeded him from making his fortune where intrigue would have been of more value than merit.

His works evince, that as long as he lived he always endeavoured to render his art more perfect; because in every one is seen some new improvement. This love of constantly studying belongs only to those who are endowed with that happy humility which makes them know how much they are deficient. Having always painted lovelily, and chosen that which was most grateful, one might infer that he was of a mild disposition, and of a studious, modest, tender, diligent, and philosophical genius: but all this capital seldom leads a man to fortune, if accidents do not drag him there by force. For the same reasons he must have been little known to the wealthy and courtizans, and of course forgotten by those who praise only the artists who make much rumour, and acquire them glory and profit. Correggio was studious, and fond of retirement, and living at a little court could not be an object for the history of such authors. To this I add, that being born after the great men who illustrated their age and profession, he ought to be regarded as a youthful painter, and disciple of those who enjoyed the greatest reputation, not being known until the age of thirty years, when Titian was seventy-seven, and Raphael was dead. In short, Correggio was the youngest among the great painters who, in the florid time of Italy, have remained so famous. The distance of more than two ages and an half since their death, makes it appear to us as if they had flourished in the same time.

The retirement in which I have said Correggio lived, and the negligence of the writers of lives, have been the cause why Vasari was so ill informed of Correggio, and of other painters of Lombardy. This cause pleases me more than envy, which many attribute to him. The truth is, that also in the most indifferent things respecting Correggio, as well as things of consequence, and in the descriptions of his paintings, Vasari speaks with equivocation, nor says the truth, as one might see in the relation which he gives of those which Correggio painted for the Duke of Mantua, and on other occasions.

When Vasari says that Correggio had more merit in execution than in design, I believe he would not wish to be understood that he designed ill, but that, from an effect of self-love, he designed best, and studied that most in his paintings. The Tuscan school acknowledged with difficulty that any other designed like them; and for that reason I believe that Vasari would wish to say that Correggio did not design like Michael Angelo, the hero of his country. This is confirmed by what the same Vasari says, confessing that the designs of Correggio are done in a good style, beautiful, and with the execution of a master. The same historian confines himself to praise almost only the excellence with which Correggio painted the hair; and it is very strange that, before so many wonderful things, he found only that praise-worthy. It is also singular that Vasari, and many others, attribute only the pure gift of nature to the excellence of Cor-

reggio in the art. This is a gross error; because, although genius can do much, no one who reflects can be persuaded that that is sufficient, without great study, to form a painter so sublime as Correggio\*, who, at the age of thirty years, had formed a new style, and more exquisite than was ever known before him. Michael Angelo, who had so great a genius, did not owe the whole of the art to his natural abilities; nor with these alone could he have found the means to exceed the limits of that dry and servile style which till then reigned in Italy; nor without great study, and the observations of the ancient statues, would he have been, perhaps, more than equal to a Donatello, and a Ghilberti. Raphael himself has left in his works the traces of his studies; and without the lessons of Father Bartholemy, and the sight of the works of Michael Angelo, and those of the ancients, we should not at this time have enjoyed his wonderful paintings. I conclude, therefore, that Correggio studied the works and the maxims of the ancients, and of the best masters, to arrive to be that prodigy of a painter which he was.

I have expressed as well as I am able, the motives by which we have not a faithful and circumstantial history of the life of Correggio. I have said that which I know, adding the conjectures which appear to me most probably. I have described his works with the greatest exact-

\* *Natura fieret laudabile carmen an arte  
Quæsitum est. Ego hæc studium sine divite vena,  
Nec rude quid prope video Ingenium: alterius sis  
Altera poscit opem res, et conjurat amice.*

ness this short account would permit ; and I have examined the degree of merit of this great man in all the parts of painting. Nothing remains now to say, only that Correggio is the modern Apelles, because in comparison with him he has possessed the 'highest grace in the art, and with his singular works he has taught the perfection which we have to search in the execution of painting, to the end that we might finally arrive to know when we may with propriety call a work complete.

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 ANNOTATIONS

ON THE

## ANTECEDENT MEMOIRS.

MENGES, as has been said, composed these memoirs to supply the defects in the life of Correggio as written by Vasari; and as there are many who, from the credit of this author, and of his Annotators, will think that these may be calumnies to discredit them, I conceive these notes necessary, in order that the reader may be able to judge on which side the truth is.

What Vasari says of Correggio in general, is evident confusion and contradiction. He makes Correggio to have a timid soul, and so much a friend to parsimony, that in consequence of his avarice he became more miserable than it is possible to express.

The works of Correggio, and the expences that attended them, contradict this supposed avarice; nay, even prove that he was of a most liberal turn of sentiment; and lastly, that he was not poor, since his labours did not render him so mean a recompense as they would generally wish us to understand.



As to the arts, Vasari says, that Correggio was in the art very much inclined to melancholy.

I cannot conceive it possible for a man to persuade himself that the invention of a painter is melancholic, who, according to the judgment of all the world, composed most cheerfully; and by which he merited from the public the title of Painter of the Graces; nor is it consistent even with the same Vasari, who says, It is held as certain, that no one disposed his colours better than him, nor with greater delicacy. No artist painted with more relief; such was the softness of the flesh which he executed, and the grace with which he finished his works. In describing the picture at Parma he subjoins—"Near this place is a child who laughs so naturally that it moves to laughter whosoever views it; nor is there any one so melancholy, who, on viewing it, does not immediately become cheerful. Are these cheerfulnesses, these gaieties of colouring, from a painter so melancholic in his art?"

Vasari in continuation says, "If Correggio had left Lombardy and had visited Rome, he would have performed miracles; because his performances being such, without having viewed the remains of antiquity, or the good works of the moderns, it necessarily follows, that if he had seen them, he would have infinitely improved his own works, and, by proceeding from good to better, would have arrived at the highest perfection."

Setting apart the point already cleared up by Mengs, "If Correggio had been at Rome;" and

even although he had not been there, it is evident that he knew and profited himself of the antique. I should be glad to know what miracles he would have done, and what things (as Vasari thinks) could have been added to the pictures of Correggio; and what conception he had of the works of that artist who asserts, that one could have infinitely improved them. For me, I should hold a man the most extraordinary who could be capable of telling me, and much more of persuading me, of the defects of that painter. And if he should add the knowledge of painting better than him; I should esteem him the greatest artist upon earth. It is not less extraordinary, that one who painted like Vasari, found it so easy, infinitely to amend the works of Correggio. Upon the question so disputed, if Correggio was at Rome, and if he improved himself from the pictures of Melozzo of Forli, which were in the ancient church of the Holy Apostles, I say that various pictures cut from that tribune now exist in the Vatican, in the apartment where Benedict XIII. lived; and which now is the habitation of the Cardinal Zelada, Librarian; where the curious will be able to confront them with those of Correggio.

The manner of the design of Correggio did not please Vasari, since in a marginal note he remarks, that he excelled more in colouring than in design; and immediately in the text he excuses him, on account of the difficulty of possessing all the parts of an art so extensive as that of painting; because many have designed well, and coloured badly, and so on the contrary.

This species of criticism means not otherwise than that Correggio did not design in the manner that Vasari did, and that he selected different forms from either Vasari or his school. The one held as good all contortions, and designed every thing with force and energy, arrogantly displaying his skill in anatomy, whilst the other was all softness, sweetness, and grace; but in his manner, Correggio was as able a designer as the most able Tuscan: and the same Vasari confesses that his designs are of a good taste, that they have grace, and the touch of a master.

The annotator of Vasari goes much further than him, assuring us that if the Caraccis had repainted the Tribune of St. John at Parma, which they had already copied from the original, that although they had remained inferior to Correggio in the colouring, they would have equalled, if not surpassed him in design. The Caraccis, who were of some consequence in the world by having studied or imitated Correggio, were sufficiently modest not to aspire to such an eulogium; and too able in their profession not to know the merit of their master. Vasari, after having exhibited to us the pusillanimity of Correggio, the obscurity in which he is supposed to have lived, and that his misery could not be exceeded, informs us, that the Duke of Mantua chose him to paint two pictures worthy the acceptance of Charles the Fifth, to whom he wished to present them; and that Giulio Romano, who was then in the service of the abovementioned Duke, and not preferred to Correggio, declared to have

never in his life seen such colouring. Giulio Romano spoke at least of what he had seen; but it was not possible that Vasari could have seen them, nor could have been well informed of what he writes, because his relation accords in nothing with the truth. The Danae he calls Venus, and says that in that picture the landscape was the most beautiful that any Lombard had ever painted, when there is not a shadow of a landscape in that picture; and subjoins, That which gave the more grace to the Venus, was a clear and limpid stream which ran amongst some rocks bathing her feet. This might in part apply to the Leda, as one may see by the description which Menges gives of it, and in the print taken from this picture: but in the Danae, which Vasari calls Venus, one finds nothing at all of this; and he who will may see it in two copies of this picture sufficiently exact, which are in Rome, one in the house of the Prince Santa Croce, and the other at that of the Marchese Orsini de Cavalieri.

Vasari ascribes to Correggio the painting of the Tribune of the *Duomo* at Parma, when that *Duomo* never had a Tribune painted by Correggio; it was certainly in the church of St. John: by the same mistake Vasari places in the above-mentioned *Duomo*, two pictures in oil by Correggio, which have always been in St. John's; but this error has already been remarked by Bottari. Twice Vasari speaks of the admirable art with which Correggio painted hair. The thing is true; but it appears ridiculous that Correggio

having so much merit in the other more noble parts, he should affectedly praise this trifling ability.

After the confession and disorder with which Vasari writes the life of Correggio, and after having accused him as a melancholic and pusillanimous painter, and an indifferent designer, and ignorant of his own proper merit, &c. &c. he finishes by giving him a thousand encomiums; saying, that amongst those of the profession one admires as divine every thing of his. Vasari asserts his not being able to find the portrait of Correggio, and his annotator Bottari pretends to give it to us discovered in a print of Belluzzi, but says, not from whence he copied it. Every one who sees this portrait, which represents a bald old man, and decrepit, sees at once that it cannot be the portrait of a man who died at forty years of age.

There was found at Genoa a few years ago, a small picture on wood, eight inches long, the portrait of a man, rather handsome and of a fair complexion, having this inscription: *Dosso Dosso dipinse questo ritratto di Antonio da Correggio.* Mengs got a design made from it, but I know not what is become of it. I being in Turin seven years ago, saw in the *Vigna* of the Queen, a series of portraits, amongst which was one of a middle-aged man with a beard, and light coloured hair, on which was written: *Antonio Allegri da Correggio.* Many have taxed Vasari of partiality, and many others of envy, in his history of the lives of the painters, through

negligence, through infidelity, and through the inaccuracy with which he wrote the lives of those who were not Tuscans, praising above the clouds many of them who merited not even to be mentioned. I cannot believe Vasari so malignant, since all his writings indicate a goodness of heart, and an honest man; from whence I think that he praised from sincerity him whom he thought praise-worthy according to the best of his judgment. Therefore, that which he did not understand it was not possible for him to praise; and if he had known in what consisted the grace of the works of Correggio, and the true merit of those of Raphael, he would certainly have praised them, confining himself to those parts, and would not so whimsically have taken the subject of praising them for their manner of painting hair.

One sees Vasari was persuaded, that beyond the school and manner of Michael Angelo, little good was to be expected from the fine arts. He collected all the little stories which vulgarly were prevalent amongst the prof flors. He understood the arts as a mechanic: he had no better skill; and willing to write a voluminous work, he compiled lives in the best manner he could, and in a style insipid and vulgar; which he usually spoke with his bricklayers and carpenters. Monsignor Bottari, his defender and panegyrist, excuses him in another manner, by saying, "it is not possible that Vasari would tell a lie in a thing in which he could be convinced with so much ease." A feeble reason indeed! If Vasari had

even thought so, he would not have written falsehoods upon that which he had a thousand times seen with his own eyes, as he does speaking of the pictures of Raphael in the Vatican \*.

\* The life of Correggio composed by Mengs, as I have published it, has been printed at Finale in 1781, by a certain Carlo Giuseppe Ratti, who pretending not to know the works of Mengs, gives himself as the author of this life; and to give a better appearance to it, he inserts in this publication a letter which he says was written to him by Mengs in 1774, from Madrid, in which he makes that gentleman say, that he wishes him to collect, and publish speedily, the anecdotes of the life and works of Correggio. Therefore he has published this life, as if it had never been either written or printed by Mengs, although it is truly the very fame of Mengs. Ratti has however arranged it in his own manner, by changing words and phrases wherever he treats of the arts, and has believed he has produced a master-piece by embroidering it with very precious erudition, as for example: *Correggio is a city equal to every illustrious city in Lombardy, and has produced great men of every denomination even unto Cardinals*; and therefore he, Ratti, produces epitaphs, testimonials, titles, employments, tombs, dates, chronologies, and many other anecdotes; all very useful to painting and painters. He recounts at last all the scholars of Correggio, and he recounts not a few of them, but makes them all clever, very clever fellows; and then he passes to his disciples, amongst whom he makes Lanfranco his arch-disciple, and more than arch-disciple Ferrari, probably because he was a Genoese; and terminates finally with Mengs, whom he pretends to be the faithful imitator of Correggio, without specifying in what he followed him.

Since then this Ratti is wild in publishing, it is necessary to publish him such as he really is. He is a lame Genoese with mouth awry, and with the trifling talents of imitating the motions and absurdities of people. With this desirable stock he flattered the taste of Mengs, who, notwithstanding the seriousness of his character, was pleased to divert himself with cheerful and facetious people, even in a style low and burlesque. For that reason, in his hours of repose he diverted himself frequently with Ratti; and he became so attached to him that he fixed him in his house, providing him with every thing; and to be of some service to him he was willing to make a painter of him, designing for him various sketches in clare obscure, for a picture of the Nativity of Christ, which he was engaged to do for the church of the merchants of Barcelona. This painter, who was no painter, selected the most beautiful of these sketches about six palms in height (it is a capital work that

I possess). In this manner he made his picture, without any other fatigue than to square and colour it; and by so doing he did himself immortal honour.

This man would have continued to live in the house of Menges, if, blessed by the favour of his patron, the whim had not come into his head to aspire to the hand of his daughter. Hardly was this ridiculous pretension of his discovered, than he was turned out with the approbation of the whole family, and especially with that of the wife of Menges, who was not pleased with the ill-bred manners of this fellow.

This man, nevertheless, has always preserved so great a gratitude for Menges, that, as soon as he was dead, he dissembogued his life, in which Menges would not have known himself had he had the opportunity of reading it. He has always called himself his friend and disciple; and lastly, he has reprinted Menges's Life of Correggio, giving it as his own proper work. This is the conduct of Carlo Giuseppe Ratti!

To know better the character of this man, behold one of his letters written to Menges, and chosen among many, because here he speaks of the above praised sketch of the precept.—We shall give it in the original, not being possible or necessary to translate it.

Roma, 27 Febbraro 1773.

“ Oggi dopo pranzo ho aver portata una lettera e raccoman-  
 data caldamente alla Signora di Napoli, non potendo io quietare  
 per non aver V. S. ricevuti li noti bozzetti, sono andato dal  
 Signor Agente, il quale sta male per esser egli stato assalito da  
 una fiera colica, che dette molto da temere; e da lui ho saputo  
 che subito consegnò al Corriere per mezzo del Mastro di posta  
 l'involto; onde son andato ad esso Mastro di posta, e mi ha detto  
 averlo egli stesso premurosamente consegnato; che perciò ne  
 fecino ricerca in Segreteria di Stato e dal Signor Tanucci,  
 perchè non si può esser finarrito in verun modo. Dio mio! Se  
 io supponeva questo, mi abbozzava il mio Quadro da quel boz-  
 zetto a chiaro-scuro, quello come io scrissi allora, che avea il S.  
 Giuseppe di schiena in avanti, ed il pastore colla pecora, perchè  
 quanto più me lo ricordo, mi par cosa divina.  
 “ A' Liberti seguiva la solita burletta con Musica d'Anfossi,  
 perchè Roma tuttodì vi accorre come se fosse la prima sera: ed  
 è cosa particolare a vedere la forza della Musica con quattro o  
 sei scannati mulicacci che cantano, e non raglionno un bajocco, e  
 pure compariscono valentuomini. A Valle li secondi intermezzi  
 mi dicono che hanno in contrato terribilmente, e sono Musica  
 d'un Marcellino da Capua, che ha composto per la seconda  
 commedia che dovea andare in scena ai liberti; ma che met-  
 teranno fuori al più tardi perchè sono troppo al sicuro della  
 prima. In Argentina la Musica è di Anfossi pure, e piace molto  
 due arie ed un duetto di Tenucci. Quelle di Mazzante piac-



“ ciono tutte, ma perchè quelle le canta di suo, perchè come è il  
“ primo Maestro di Cappella del Mondo, così non vuole la sua  
“ modestia che si soggetti ad alcuno. Nella prima opera che  
“ andava per terra affatto, ne fu fatta una curiosa, e fu, che venne  
“ mandato un facchino a Compostof con un paolo ed un biglietto,  
“ dove veniva supplicato il signor Impressario a consegnare al latore  
“ un paolo di bolletrini, e metterglieli in una sporta che a tale effetto  
“ gli mandavano. Mi conservi la sua grazia.”

## A DISCOURSE

UPON THE

ACADEMY OF THE FINE ARTS AT MADRID.

BY an *academy* is understood an assembly of men the most expert in science or in art, their object being to investigate truth, and to find fixed rules always conducing to progress and perfection. It is very different from a school in which able masters teach the elements of sciences or of arts. The fine arts, as liberal ones, have their fixed rules founded in reason and on experience, by which means they join to obtain their end, which is the perfect imitation of nature; from whence an academy of these arts ought not to comprehend alone the execution, but ought to apply principally to the theory and to the speculation of rules, since indeed these arts terminate in the operation of the hand; but if this is not directed by good theory, they will be deprived of the title of liberal arts.

Some erroneously think that practice alone is of more importance than all the rules together, and without them there have been great artists. False are such ideas, and so false that they merit not a confutation. Whatever is done without reason and

without rules is all hazard. How is it possible to arrive to a determinate end without a sure guide to conduct us? Painting and sculpture are arts similar to poetry; and as in this last art, sensibility, imagination and genius, can never produce, without rules and knowledge, any thing but dreams and monstrous productions, the same must happen in the two first. Therefore, as the poet, without knowing profoundly the subject which he has to treat and the language in which he is to explain himself, can never produce a perfect work, neither will the painter or sculptor know how to perform a work worthy these professions, if they know not the forms of the bodies which they imitate, and the diversity of manners with which they present them to our sight; and the same will happen if they know not the theory of the art.

I do not, however, say that theory alone ought to exclude the exercise of the hand; on the contrary, I infinitely recommend it: both ought always to be united; and in this sense ought to be understood the oracle of Michael Angelo, who was wont to say that all the art consisted in the *obedience of the hand to the conception*. This great man well understood that images ought to be well imprinted on the mind, and the idea of every thing which the hand ought to execute. From whence it is necessary always to have practice, but with the knowledge of why and wherefore.

The able professors of an academy ought to endeavour, by conferring together, to find out certain rules, by which students may be able

to abbreviate the course of arts so extensive. These rules will be prescribed to youth as fundamental laws, explaining to them reasons by clear demonstrations, which not only may convince, but persuade, since without persuasion one is not capable of doing any thing perfect.

All academies of arts have begun from being schools, and afterwards have been transformed into what we call academies, that is to say, societies of professors, who by their conferences and discourses promote instructions, and have merited the protection of princes. In this manner have begun the academies of Rome, Bologna, Florence and Paris, &c. &c.

The utility of such establishments consists in the advancement of arts, and in the influence which they occasion in a nation by disseminating there a good taste : since it is the intelligence of design which directs all arts treating of figures or of forms. This utility cannot possibly be obtained by any academy, if good reasoning and the aforesaid theory of design are not publicly taught ; because, without theory, design is only a practical and material action which produces the figure alone that one circumscribes, without giving to it a general intelligence, or instructing how to judge of the forms. For which reason, every academy which follows not the above-mentioned maxims, will have material designers and artisans, but not illuminated and excellent artists ; and in consequence will operate against its principal end, and will waste the time that it employs in bad instructions.

Applying now the discourse to the academy of St. Ferdinand, let us see what reason finds there good or bad established for the profit of the nation. The aforesaid academy began by design and modelling, as all others, and the generosity of the founder endowed it perhaps more amply than any other academy in Europe. Many believe that the fruit which it has produced abundantly corresponds to its institution; but as good as a thing may be, it is always susceptible of improvement, therefore it appears to me that something could be rectified.

This academy is governed by those who ought to protect it, that is to say, by counsellors, who by their high birth, employments, and circumstances, have not had an opportunity of instructing themselves fundamentally either in works or concerning artists. They are those who vote and accept or refuse persons who aspire to the honour of being admitted into the academy. Hence, favours do not depend on those who are capable to judge of merit. It is, however, true that these gentlemen, before they decide, hear the professors in all things respecting art; but if they are obliged to regulate themselves according to these councils, their decision is useless; for what use can it be to have the propositions of those who cannot decide, and let those decide who cannot propose? In all other academies of the world, there are professors who vote and decide absolutely in what respects the government of them, and as to the merit of individuals and their works; and the princes and nobles reserve no other privilege to themselves than that of protecting and honour-

ing the art and artists. This protection ought to be effective, and not a mere appearance, by distinguishing the professors according to their merit, and not confounding them with artificers, and employing them in works of importance; because, if the nobles and rich men of a kingdom have not an inclination to encourage works, and so to diffuse the taste of art throughout a nation, they will perish for want of support; because, if the king alone employs artists, he cannot employ more than a limited number, and the taste of the arts concentrates itself in his person alone, causing barbarism in all the remaining part of the kingdom; as in another place has been said to have happened from the reign of Philip II. unto that of our sovereign, notwithstanding they loved and protected the arts, and chiefly that of painting, and nevertheless good taste has never diffused itself generally through the nation. These circumstances being supposed, the academy of Madrid is to be considered either as an academy or a school, or both together. Whichever of these things it may be, it is always required that the members who compose it be masters the most expert in the arts, since the academicians ought to be capable of explaining the definitions of the art from whence the rules are deduced, because, to act like a master, it is necessary to know well the profession. Academic discourses discover the difficulties of the art to youth who are willing to profess it, and place the *dilettantis* in a situation to understand, and to be capable of soundly judging of works. This circumstance

is sometimes more necessary in Spain than in other places, because the generality of the nation have not a just idea of arts, and of their dignity, or of many gifts from heaven, or of study, which ought to concur to make a great artist. The abovementioned discourses, and academic conferences, will also serve to professors themselves, because not all know scientifically the principles of their profession, and will be by these means stimulated to study them. Finally, in consequence of examining matter, one shall destroy by little and little the false maxims that may have intruded themselves in the rules of the arts. Youth will have another advantage in hearing the great difficulties that attend the arts in the difficult study that they pursue; for then would generous souls alone undertake them, and those who discover less force and less talents would abandon the undertaking, or would be content to apply themselves to a part proportioned to their capacity. In this manner every talent would remain at liberty, nor would be constrained to the uniformity of study; and that which imports more, it would acquire art, but not the particular style of any master.

The greatest utility which, as I think, would arise from such studies, would be that the nobility and wealthy would instruct themselves in the principles of the arts, and would conceive for them a proper love and esteem; as in many of them there is a natural disposition, and nothing is wanted but to have heard professors who could make them perceive the importance, dignity and

splendour of the arts. History offers to us the necessity of this esteem, since wherever it is wanting, the arts and sciences are infallibly wanting also. The Egyptians, who invented almost all the arts, never perfected any one, because they did not honour their professors, not considering them otherwise than as artificers. The Phœnicians advanced them a little more, because they gave as an object to the arts the utility of commerce. Greece, and particularly in learned Athens, where there was a greater equality of persons in the state, and where the arts and sciences were esteemed little less than divine, and where ingenuity led to the highest situation of citizenship, it was there where painting, sculpture, and architecture flourished most worthily. The Romans never equalled the Grecians in these professions, because their road to honour was in the military service, and they availed themselves of the artists of conquered Greece, reduced to a severe servitude. Whence they debased the artists and their works. I therefore conclude that, to the end that the arts may flourish in a nation, it is not only necessary that their works may be esteemed, but that the artists may be proportionately honoured, since otherwise no generous soul will sacrifice his labours and his life in a profession which, instead of bringing him honour, discredits him; for which reason the pusillanimous alone will apply themselves to arts, who aspire to nothing but interest, and are incapable of the sublime conceptions that the arts require, because the work itself is always the por-



trait of the soul of the artist! Every nation would acquire great advantages if its first nobles and most powerful people attached themselves to the arts, as we see to have happened in all ages when they have flourished; and some of them cultivated them sufficiently to be enabled to understand them, as we have various examples, and especially that of the Emperor Adrian. Then they assuredly elevate themselves to the utmost perfection, because knowing their merits they cherish them, and employ artists by putting them in a situation to display their talents; for it is no less advantageous to professors to be employed, than to learn, the one remaining useless without the other.

Considering now the academy of Madrid as a school, it is necessary to make some reflections. Even to these latter times good examples of the arts were here wanting. In this, however, they have at last been supplied, the academy being now possessed of the best and most copious collection of casts of the antique statues that are in Europe. From this one now is in a capacity to learn proportions, the art of expressing anatomy without harshness, a selection of fine forms, and the true character of beauty. Yet according to my belief much time is wanted to acquire an uniform system of design, and some necessary parts of art which they either do not teach, or teach improperly. Upon these matters I will speak my opinion ingenuously.

Although there are found in Madrid many professors of merit, one cannot deny but there have

been, and that there are now elsewhere, schools more reputable. One ought not, therefore, to give as an example to youth the particular works of the artists of this academy, but one ought to take the best works of every school, and of all the most celebrated professors. In this manner boys, from their most tender age, will accustom themselves to a good style. Another very great advantage will result from it, which is, that the masters of the academy will be able to speak with freedom, not being led away by self love or by human prejudices, which prevent a man from speaking frankly his sentiments, there where he speaks of his own work, or of his associates, having themselves many reasons to palliate their own opinions.

It would be also very convenient that professors should give a good example in designing and of modelling together with their scholars in the modelling room, by this means animating the youth and the professors themselves in the inferior classes: this study being much more useful to the advanced than to scholars. Above all it would be necessary that one should examine with the greatest attention every thing proposed to youth; not submitting to the caprice of particulars the introductions of vicious examples, since it is much more difficult to undo a vice acquired in early years, than to learn a thousand good things.

The time that is destined in the academy for study is neither sufficient or proper, because the hours of the night are few for a study so ex-

tensive ; and the spirits of a youth, distracted by the occupations of the day, have not the necessary activity for learning, and for fixing in the memory the things that are taught him. It would be therefore necessary, since the academy is to be also a school, to do that which is practised in the schools of other branches, that is to say, to employ in study the latest hours of the day, with the assistance of professors of an inferior rank, and those should give an account to the superior of the progress and of the mode of teaching. This exercise would be, besides that, very useful to themselves; and the principal masters ought to review the studies of youth, in order to change the classes according to their progress.

The exercise of night ought to serve only for those who, being already advanced in the theory of the art, have occasion to augment the practice by frequent use, because otherwise, with the solicitude with which they ought to work at night, pupils accustom themselves to an incorrectness which degenerates into a vicious negligence, there not being time to observe well the rules and the reasons of art ; and those who begin to copy rudiments have not sufficient time to see the fruit of their application, whence many discourage themselves and abandon the study already begun. In short, if the academy is to be a school, it is necessary to practise there all that which a vigilant and good master ought privately to do for his own disciples; otherwise it will never become an useful school.

If laws, and the maxims of public lectures, are

not fixed in a manner that youth learn as if they studied under one master only, they will confuse the disciple by following different, and sometimes contradictory rules.

For that reason it would be necessary, that professors congregate themselves and well examine matters: they should consult and determine the method which ought to be followed, weighing well reasons, pro and contra, reserving nevertheless to amend them, whenever experience and reason may indicate the necessity.

The things which ought to be taught with a greater diligence are, linear and aerial perspective, selecting notwithstanding a short method. Then comes anatomy, not as physicians and surgeons learn it, but as it is suitable to the arts, which have for their object the imitation of the exterior forms of things: and as amongst all the bodies of nature there is not for man any thing more noble, and more worthy than the human figure, it is very necessary for him to know it exactly, both in the whole and in its parts, and this is taught as by anatomy. Whence it is that perspective shews to us the manner of imitating the appearance of forms, which one cannot execute without knowing it anatomically. For this reason, this science is equally necessary to the sculptor and the painter.

Nor is less precious the study of symmetry, that is to say, of the proportions of the human body, without which it is not possible to know how to select from nature the most perfect bodies. By this the ancient Greeks distinguished

themselves so superiorly from us; and they derived beauty, grace and animation from the knowledge of proportions.

The art of light and shade, which is called *claire obscure*, ought to be taught with the same accuracy, since without it painting cannot have any relief; therefore it is necessary to consider it as an essential part, so much the more as painters have not always the opportunity of seeing things according to nature; and when even they have, it is not so easy to understand the reasons of them, and to keep fast to truth by not permitting themselves to be transported by any practical rules followed by ignorant people, and learned without reflection from their masters. Finally, *claire obscure* is a part doubly useful, because it pleases the intelligent as well as those who are not so.

I know not if lessons of colouring have ever been given, notwithstanding it is a part so principal in painting, that it has its rules founded on science and reason. Without such study, it is impossible that youth can acquire a good taste in colouring, or understand harmony.

In the same manner it is necessary to teach invention and composition without omitting the art of composing drapery. All these have equally their fixed rules; rules necessary to be learned, to understand what one sees in nature. I will not say that with these rules alone, and without talents, it is possible to acquire the arts: I say, however, that without them, no one will ever arrive to be an excellent artist; and if even all

the rules are not susceptible of demonstration, those indeed which respect imitation they absolutely admit, and those of election have their reasons almost evident.

Some possibly will say, that all this study that I propose for an academy, could be done by some master professor in his own house to his disciples. To me it appears otherwise, believing it impossible that any one man can know equally well so many things; and if indeed he knew them, I know not if he would have time or convenience to teach them. Besides which it might happen, that amongst those who study under a particular master one would find some of talents, which by defect of good instruction, or from some other motive, cannot arrive to make him a man of great merit; whilst in a public school he will have occasion to develop his own ingenuity, and to distinguish himself by emulation, and from a poor unhappy man render himself an artist, who may give honour to the art, and glory to his country.

Although architecture may be a part constituent of an academy equally with that of painting and sculpture, I have not spoken of it, not being willing to go out of my profession; but I believe that without entering into the foundation of it, one may say, that since the academy will be a school of the fine arts, architecture ought also to be taught there, since one conceives not what a school is without lectures.

Although architecture has not in nature any prototype sufficiently known to recur to, like

painting and sculpture, it has nevertheless certain rules of convenience which form its taste, and these may be good or bad as in the other fine arts. That which is to be proposed to youth is perfection; that is, that which ages and reason have authorized as the best, viz. the primitive Greeks. Whoever studies and knows by memory the dimensions and proportions of Vignola, or some such similar author, will not for that reason only have a taste for good or bad architecture; as he who knows the mechanic measure of verses will not be more a poet on that account. The Vignolas are to Vitruvius, what the Gradus ad Parnassum is to the Poetic of Horace. Examples by being such ought not to be proposed, if the author from whom they come merits it not; and this is exactly that which the professors of an academy ought to examine.

They ought especially to make a great distinction between architecture and the art of building, a circumstance which even in the frontispiece of books is wont to be confounded. Invention and taste make an architect; mathematics and physics are his servants and ministers; the first is as the head of a man, and the second as his hands. Invention requires great talents, well cultivated, and the art of building is all mechanical and material. At those, who by this last road pretend to be architects, and great men, Martial laughs, when he advises a father to make his stupid son an architect:

*Si duli puer Ingenii videtur,  
Placconem facias vel architectum.*

# PRACTICAL LESSONS.

OF

*P A I N T I N G.*

BY

112





## INTRODUCTION.

RULES FOR MASTERS, IN ORDER TO TEACH WELL THE ART  
OF PAINTING, AND FOR PUPILS TO LEARN IT  
AS THEY OUGHT.

SINCE painting is a liberal art, it must necessarily have a method; and if it has a method, it must consequently have sure and certain rules. I therefore think it will be useful for me to set forth here, what reflections every young man ought to make before he begins this profession, and the path he ought to follow after he has undertaken it, that he may always advance the more in his career; and at the same time, I shall say how the master ought to conduct himself in order to teach his art. Therefore, according to my custom, I give up all pretensions to eloquence, and shall endeavour to explain myself as simply as possible, in order to be understood by all classes of people.

The first quality a boy ought to have who is destined by his superiors to follow painting (I say superiors, because this profession must be commenced before we have a will of our own), is penetration, attention, and patience; and we must not suffer ourselves to be dazzled by that vivacity, nor by that fire which is commonly taken for genius, but is not it in reality: on the

contrary, that vivacity often prevents children from reflecting upon things, and consequently from making improvements in painting. We must therefore mind not to be deceived in taking for a genius for painting that inclination to be painters, which is seen in many children. The fortunes made by some painters induce many parents to bring their children up to this profession, who, after having studied it for a long time, quit it with the same levity with which they undertook it.

In order to shun these inconveniencies, a master who is both skilful and honest, should, before he takes a boy, examine well him and his parents. In the boy he ought to expect only penetration, patience, a love for work, and particularly an exact sight. The father ought to be perfectly disinterested, and have a strong inclination to afford his son every necessary help; and he must not do as many who call themselves friends, in having paid for a youth a master for a short time.

If the boy is found to be possessed of all the requisite qualifications, the master must on his side begin by divesting himself as much as he can of his self-love, and teach him all he knows, all he has learnt, and what has not been taught him by any one, and above all he must never be apprehensive of teaching too much; and if unfortunately he should be infected with this foible, I would advise him never to be a master, for it would not be acting as an honest man, wilfully to bring up people to be wretched;

nor do I see a greater misfortune for a man than to have wasted his youth to become a bad painter: and as that depends on the master, he can easily avoid this evil, since no one has a precise obligation to instruct pupils.

It is true, that the world is full of ingratitude, and that a skilful painter in giving his pupil a good education runs the risk of bringing up a viper in his own bosom: but other men's vices are not an excuse for ours; nor can that painter ever exculpate himself, who in bringing up a youth is the cause of his repenting all his life having undertaken this profession. Those professors who by powerful recommendation and without interest see themselves compelled to receive pupils, if they do not teach them with requisite care and application, are nevertheless excusable; for it is certain that it costs more time and more trouble to finish a good pupil, than the largest picture in the world. Therefore it seems to me very unjust for patrons to pretend, that an artist should lose his time in teaching the art to those who bring him no profit or interest in doing it. This unreasonable practice generally prevails in Italy, which by degrees ruins painting, and the youths who are brought up to it, in spite of the fine geniuses which are to be found. But I shall quit this subject, which draws me from my object, and proceed to the rules and reasons of the art, which I proposed to myself to explain, and therefore shall employ a kind of dialogue, by questions and answers.

Q. How can one know if a child has the necessary dispositions for painting?

A. If he has more sense than vivacity, one may conceive good hopes.

Q. What age should the beginner be of?

A. The more tender, the more proper to begin, for from four years he may learn something; and then it will be easier for him to acquire a precision of sight, as his organs will not have contracted any particular habit.

Q. And if he began later, could he ever be a good painter?

A. Undoubtedly; but it would cost him much more trouble: for he must necessarily have employed the preceding time in something, which must take up some part of his memory, and prevent him from learning painting with the same facility.

Q. Nevertheless, have there not been eminent painters, who have begun their studies at an advanced age?

A. Yes. But the greatest men have all learned painting from their most tender infancy. Raphael was son to a painter, who perhaps made him begin painting as soon as reason appeared in him. Titian began when a child. Michael Angelo handled the marble at twelve. Correggio having lived only forty years, left so great a number of excellent works that they could not have been done in haste, and he must necessarily have begun to work very early. It is however true, that some good painters have begun later; but if they succeeded on account of their extraordinary abili-

ties, how much more would they not have excelled if they had begun at an earlier age!

Q. What is the first thing a master ought to teach his pupil?

A. As it is not easy to discover soon the genius and character of children, it is necessary to make them begin by drawing geometrical figures, but without rule or compasses, that they may accustom their sight to exactness, which is the fundamental basis of design; since there is no object, whose outlines, and form, are not composed of figures, and simple or compound geometrical lines. Therefore, if the child knows how to make these figures by the eye, he will know how to draw accurately any thing, and will easily conceive all the proportions.

Q. Will it not be better to make him draw the human figure, which, if composed of geometrical figures, will teach at once what by the other means is learnt at twice?

A. This advice is very pernicious; because the beauty of the outlines of the human figure depends on expressing rightly all the imperceptible lines and broken forms, which form a whole of geometrical figures intermixed and confused with each other; so that it is impossible for a child to conceive them with clearness and precision, and still more difficult for the master to judge by them of the exactness of sight of his pupil; whereas in a simple triangle, for instance, it is easy to know the defects and faults committed by the eye or the hand.

Q. What is the fault of the eye?

*A.* There are people who see things longer than broad, and others the contrary. Some at a certain distance judge all objects to be greater than they are, and others less; and therefore I think it proper that children should draw geometrical figures, because in the plainest objects errors are most easily detected: therefore the master may, for instance, in a triangle, know in a moment, by means of the rule and compasses, the want of exactness in the eye of his pupil.

*Q.* The reason would be good if it were not contradicted by practice; since neither Raphael, the Caraccis, Domenichino, nor, finally, any great painter has ever been known to take this method, in order to perform the excellent works which they have made.

*A.* This is partly true, but stands in need of some explanation. Leonardo da Vinci, who has left us several rules of proportion of the human body, decides, that geometry is necessary to painters. Raphael's masters taught him to draw with an extraordinary precision; therefore he could not help having at first a very servile and dry taste, which he could only quit when he saw the ancient paintings, and the works of Michael Angelo, which he imitated because he had formed to himself the most exact eye that is possible to be had. A genius so pure, and correct, has not appeared in the world for more than two centuries and an half; therefore it would be presumption to suppose, that any child whatever, who is brought up to painting, should be endowed with so rare a talent, so that it is necessary to examine the

gifts which nature has imparted to him. The Caraccis followed the rules of proportion, which they found settled; and I finally admire in them several things more than extreme correctness.

Q. How? Was not Hannibal extremely correct?

A. Correctness is taken in different senses; and in one of these he was correct, and owed it not so much to the exactness of his eye, as to the practice acquired by drawing much. Domenichino drew so often the group of Laocoon, that he knew it by heart. Nevertheless none of the painters, that are mentioned, have equalled the purity and precision of the antique: and as without being accused of a low fear we ought to undertake what others have done, I therefore propose to aspire to the most perfect; and if when Raphael learnt correctness from his masters, they had at the same time taught him to avoid their dry taste, and to draw nature by geometrical figures, he would not have been obliged afterwards to change his manner. If Caracci and Domenichino had learnt painting, according to the method which I propose, we should not have seen in their outlines so many false lines corrected, and in those of the latter particularly, that cold and timid taste which we see in them.

Q. But this geometrical study might sometimes be prejudicial to elegance and ease

A. Quite the contrary. Elegance consists in the great variety of curved lines and angles, and it is geometry alone that can give the facility of performing these things with a sure hand, and



with the qualities required. But I do not pretend that this study alone of geometrical figures can form great painters. I say that correctness being the most difficult part to be found in them, and that depending on exactness of sight; it can be acquired in no manner so easily as by the study of geometry. To this is added, that a child by drawing for a month geometrical figures with accuracy, will learn more exactness than another who has been drawing in an academy for a year; and the first in six months time will know how to lay a figure well, and will have a good foundation for proceeding in the other parts of the art.

Q. What must be done after having drawn the said geometrical figures?

A. Outlines from good drawings and pictures must be drawn, and the proportions of the human body must be studied, in order to learn a good taste of drawing, which the master must teach from the proportions of antique statues; and then the attention must be redoubled, and the least want of correctness must not be excused: when this is done, and a certain practice of drawing outlines with freedom has been acquired, then they must begin clare obscure.

Q. Must the beginner be kept long in drawing outlines?

A. Till he has acquired a competent facility.

Q. When this is done, what must he study?

A. He must begin to shade, minding to make his drawings with the utmost purity; for if he acquires then this important qualification, it lasts also afterwards all his lifetime in painting. I

shall likewise observe, that when he draws in clare obscure he must study anatomy, and perspective, in order to prepare to draw afterwards from life.

Q. If on drawing geometrical figures it has been said that six months after one can draw well an academical figure, why must one spend one's time in drawing designs and pictures, since it seems that it would be more expeditious to begin immediately to draw statues?

A. It is not so; for in order to draw statues well, one must know perspective: and though I have said that the beginner will in that state know how to lay a figure, he must not, however, do it; for he would accustom himself to a cold imitation, without understanding foreshortenings; or he would lose that exactness of sight he might have acquired.

Q. How must perspective be studied?

A. One must begin by studying a little elementary geometry, and one shall then immediately learn to put all one's figures in perspective.

Q. A little geometry seems to me insufficient, since we see that those who wish to teach perspective fundamentally, cause not only the whole geometry, but also architecture, at least the rules of the five orders, to be learnt, as they assert that one cannot lay a thing in due perspective if one is not perfectly acquainted with geometry.

A. Those who are of that opinion are not deceived. But I think that to form a painter, the prudent master must endeavour to make him know all the requisites of his art in equal proportions,

portions, and not let him lose his early time, which is the most precious, in things that are not of the first utility.

Q. Will the painter lose his time then, if he studies perspective fundamentally?

A. No: but as this is a much easier thing than others which constitute the art of painting, it is not proper that the student should employ too much time in it, before learning those which are most necessary:—the more so, since the articles of perspective which are most necessary for a painter, are only the plan, the square in all its aspects; the triangle, the round, the oval, and above all to conceive rightly the difference of the point of view, and the variety which the point of distance produces when taken far or near.

Q. How is anatomy to be studied? Many say that it is not necessary, and that those painters who have applied themselves to it, have all fallen into a dry and graceless taste.

A. Those who say that anatomy is not necessary are grossly mistaken; for, without it, it is not possible to reason upon the parts of a naked figure. But in all, moderation and judgment must prevail, there being great difference between giving all to a part, and knowing how to employ it well; and rules must serve a painter only to uniform himself to nature, and make him understand it well.

Q. But anatomy is so long a study?

A. It is certainly not so long when rightly taught, that is to say, when the painter is taught no more than what is necessary to him; for a

physician and the surgeon must study it very differently, as they are to know all the interior play of the parts of man, and the painter wants only to know the effects they have on the surface.

## SECTION I.

Painting is one of the three fine arts, which has for its object the imitation of truth, namely, the appearance of all visible things. The materials necessary for this imitation are the three colours, red, yellow, and blue, to which are added black and white; which, without being properly colours, serve to represent light and darkness.

All the intermediate colours are composed of the three aforesaid, which are the primitive, and with them art imitates all the appearances of nature upon a flat surface: as for instance, if through a glass we were to see a landscape, a man, a horse, or any other object whatsoever, and we were to put on the glass all the colours like those which we see; when that operation was ended, we should find that we had made a picture like the objects which we had first seen through the glass. By this means, though by a different process, the painter proceeds in laying on a surface the colours with which he produces in the beholder the same effect as if he saw the real objects. From hence it proceeds, that any surface whatsoever, covered with colours; which gives us ideas either of forms or of figures, is

called painting, which as an art is only the manner of disposing the colours so, that by their disposition and modification they may excite in the spectator ideas of things which he either had previously seen, or are possible to be seen.

All objects which are perceived by the eye, are known little by little and gradually; therefore it has been necessary, that art should likewise divide the imitation of objects in parts, and in different degrees; otherwise it would be as impossible to make works of merit, as to ascend to the top of an edifice without steps. At first sight objects produce no other idea but that of their existence. Their form makes us afterwards recollect that we have seen other things like them, which by common consent are called man, horses, &c. On pursuing the observation we shall find the manner in which that object is, and immediately after the general and particular proportions, and even its smallest parts. In the same manner the painter must begin by representing to himself, a place where an action takes place; then in his imagination he must place the bodies that are to be there; and this is what answers to invention. He immediately will think on the manner of placing each object, as well respecting the whole as respecting the different parts or members; and this belongs to composition. Finally, he will regulate the figure, or the particular form of each object, and that is what is called designing; and as those forms cannot be perfectly expressed, owing to their being on a flat surface, designing is inseparable from the art of shades and lights,

which is understood by clare obscure. The forms being determined, then follow the colours of bodies, and the manner, and the management which may be more or less proper to express objects, their essence and texture. All this is in general; but, in order to learn it, it must be studied separately with the utmost attention, for otherwise it will be as impossible to learn well as to erect a building without previously preparing the materials. I shall treat of each object in particular.

The word *Painting* may be taken in two senses; either as an art, or as a production of art. In the second sense, all surfaces on which several colours have been laid for some end, or reason, are called paintings, or pictures, which will be more or less full of art, according to the reasons with which they are made. Now, in the first sense, as a productive art, it is one of those arts whose scope is an imitation of truth; that is to say, all visible objects, in the manner they present themselves to our sight. To attain this end, we make use of several means, which I shall speak of, beginning by imitation.

Painting imitates the appearance of Nature by means of the five aforementioned colours, which serve for its materials; and they are White, Yellow, Red, Blue and Black. Although the first and the last are not, properly speaking, colours; yet a painter must consider them as such, on account of the great utility he draws from them to represent lights and

shades; since in this art we have no other means to represent these two qualities, and even by these they are obtained but imperfectly, for those reasons which I shall explain hereafter. As to the other colours, such as Orange, Purple, Violet and Green, they are only tints composed of two colours, as we see not only by experience from painting, but in the rainbow, and by the prism, where the said colours are not to be found in any other place but in the middle of their components; where the rays of the three primitive colours intersect. Green is between Blue and Yellow, Orange between Yellow and Red; and Purple or Violet between Red and Blue. These colours are the materials which the painter employs to appear to him who looks at a painting; that on a surface there are several bodies separated from each other, and which in part are enlightened, and in part deprived of a direct light, and receive only a share of that light which is intermixed with the mass of air, or receive light by reflexion from other bodies, or totally deprived of light. This imitation depends on the uniformity which exists in forms, and their quantities and qualities with those of nature: but as in this the parts of a body are infinite, the art of the painter consists in knowing how far he can imitate. To find this, he must consider the effect which all things make on him when he considers them wholly, and at that distance where his eyes can see all the body in question; otherwise he will do some part well, but

never the whole. Besides which, we must consider, that in painting we have neither true light, nor true darkness, that is to say, a total privation of light; and we ought also to reflect, that a painted board is an equal surface which receives light on all its parts. As black in painting is not in itself more dark than any other black body which is enlightened, it requires a particular art to make black, in a painting, appear a privation of light. For the same reason, much skill is requisite to make the shades appear as such, and not as spots of a darker colour than that of the natural body. In the article upon colouring, I shall teach the manner of performing all these things.

The same, nay a greater difficulty is found in light, because a painted board can be seen only in such a position that the light which it receives be not reflected to the eyes of the beholder, otherwise the lights and shades would appear as in a glass, and the lights would appear extremely clear in a greater, or lesser degree according to the smoothness of the surface; and lights in painting, however white they may be, can only have the clearness of a half tint of a white body; consequently, the painter that would imitate a body of a smooth or polished surface to reflect light, should employ much art, and then he will not obtain it to perfection. Therefore, I advise painters to avoid these cases, and to proportion those objects they want to paint to the power of art,



There are an infinite number of cases in which it is impossible to paint a luminous body, and the lights of a white body. Finally, there is almost no object in nature which a painter can copy as he sees, and if any were found who had the patience, like Mr. Denner of Hambourg, to make every wrinkle, and every hair with its shadow and in the apple of an eye to represent the whole window of the apartment, with the clouds which are in the air; yet, although all that should be done, and even better than he did (who was unique, and admirable in this kind of painting,) yet such a painting could never appear true, except with the condition of seeing it always at that distance in which the painter made it; the reason of which is, that on seeing a picture, there is always some circumstance which undeceives us, and makes us know, that what is fictitious is not true. Let us suppose that the picture were perfect in all its parts; that it were placed in its principal point of view; that it had but one distance to be viewed from; that the light in which it was placed were just in the same manner it ought to be to produce the same lights and shades on the figures as if they were true; notwithstanding all these conditions, we should be undeceived by the flat surface, by the very strokes of the pencil, and by the want of that air which ought to be between remote objects, lights and shades, and the lights would be weakened, as likewise the shades, by the interposition of the air, and the effects of the

great work of the painter would be destroyed. Hence it is inferred, that to make an ingenious imitation of nature (which is not servile, but judicious,) truth must be imitated only as it can exist, by giving it that proper disposition of the object, and the idea that is wished should be conceived by the beholder; and that any form may preserve its peculiarity, and characteristic quality in all the parts of the art; and that every object be represented in an intelligible manner, and distinguished from any other whatsoever; finally, that whatever is natural be imitated in the most proper manner to give the beholder a clear idea of the painter's meaning.

Great painters have followed two paths to obtain these ends. Some have rejected those parts which were not absolutely necessary for their end, and thereby have made appear with greater advantage what they wished should be observed: others have sought all the significant parts, and have marked them with much precision, in order to give a very clear idea of what they wished to express. The prince of the first is Correggio, and of the second Raphael. Both, by their respective styles, have raised painting to its utmost perfection; since, as I believe, the most one can attain is to make a painting appear as through a glass, more or less dim or dull. I omit many other reasons, reserving them for that place where I shall speak of each part of painting.

## II.

*Of Design.*

BY Design is chiefly understood outline, or the circumference of things with the proportion of their length, breadth, and form. We must not consider which forms are the most graceful, and give them the preference, in order to make the work cause an agreeable effect; and this is to be observed not only in the figures, but likewise in the space which remains between them and their members. The forms which are most agreeable are those which are most varied; and the disagreeable are those which are repeated in themselves, as the square and the round: the first, because they are composed of four lines which are parallel two by two; and the second, because they are the same thing on all sides, and present no variety to the sight, and consequently, no gracefulness. The oval, or the ellipsis, is not so uniform. The triangle is the least disagreeable among all the regular figures, because its angles are of an uneven number, and its lines form no parallels.

In painting, we must utterly avoid all repetitions of lines and forms, all parallels and angles of equal degrees, and above all, right angles, because in these we have not even the liberty to vary their size; and in others, we have the power of making them greater or less, that is to say, more acute or more obtuse; and in

other figures, we are more at liberty to vary their size.

For this purpose, it is necessary that a painter should be well acquainted with perspective; because, by that means, he will be enabled to vary all his regular forms; as, for instance, a square into a trapezium, or in an irregular form, he may enlarge, or contract a triangle; a circle may be changed into an ellipsis, and thus he will avoid all repetitions. Finally, if one member presents itself in its geometrical aspect, the corresponding one must be shortened to keep up a varied appearance.

No form must be uniform, and even right lines must be changed into waved, which will cause no prejudice to the principal forms, if one observes, that the parts of the circles touch at different points, distances, and heights, and the right line form no angle, but vary alternately in concave and convex lines. A line so drawn is the most proper to give grace and elegance to the out lines; for, without altering the height or elevation of a member, it can be made to appear lighter in a greater or less degree; for by making the convex lines greater than the concave, they will become heavy, and making them the contrary, they will appear light. Therefore a just proportion must be given to these two kinds of forms, as I shall explain more fully in the chapter on Gracefulness of Design.

In a naked body one cannot make angles, except when a muscle, or one part is concealed

behind another ; for in such a case, by a kind of intersection, it forms an angle, and then it is necessary to observe well where that muscle, or that part rises ; in which many painters have erred through ignorance of anatomy. These intersections are made in different ways. They are made in members which are seen entirely when the obliquity of a muscle has its origin in the part which is not seen ; and in the foreshortenings, for many times a muscle is interrupted when the fleshy part covers the concave which binds it to the tendons ; and for the same reason there are so many intersections in the foreshortenings, as all the convex forms conceal or diminish the concave. On this account, prudent painters avoid foreshortenings in graceful objects as much as they can ; and when they cannot possibly do without them, they put as few as possible, and only those which are indispensably necessary. In those of a harsh character, and of a strong expression, where an altered style can be adopted, it is employed with success ; and the same thing happens in those cases when one member intersects another, and angles are formed ; but then we must observe where the line intersects, for if the member which is concealed behind the other, crosses at the beginning of its convexity, it will be displeasing to the sight, since it will appear that they are incompatible, one making its appearance without, and the other within. If such a meeting of lines cannot possibly be avoided, it may be remedied by

covering that part with some drapery, or by making the intersection in the straight part of the member, which we wish to conceal: and if neither that can succeed, we must endeavour to make it fall where the curve line is greatest, that on the other side the same kind of line may be found.

I have warned the painter not to make any figures perfectly geometrical, and therefore he must observe, that when any regular form occurs, he must not end the lines in angles, but round off their ends; since, by that means, the sight will have that variety of forms which constitutes gracefulness. If, on the contrary, a round form should occur, he may vary it by making some planes, and waving the line. Finally, we must hold as a certain rule, that no figure must be made perfectly angular, nor perfectly round, as no object is more unpleasant to the sight of a painter.

These observations must be made on the works of those masters who are most eminent for Designs, and particularly on those who have shewn a good taste in Design, such as the Caraccis; and some of their pupils, who, though they might have had occasion to represent; for instance, a stone cut according to all the nicety of art, yet they certainly would have made it with broken angles. In design is comprised all that part of painting which serves to determine the form of bodies; and, although this part is inseparable with lights and shades, yet it is particularly understood of forms, which are the ends,

and last parts which we see of bodies. This part is composed of two others which are principal, that is to say, of the knowledge of the proper form of a thing, and the manner of seeing it. The second seems to belong to optics, which, in painting, is comprehended in perspective, a part of optic; and the first, as to human bodies, and those of all animals, depends on anatomy; and in other bodies, from the knowledge of their proper forms, it is impressed on the memory by means of geometry. We must however observe, that pictorial geometry, for the painter must not know the reasons of the forms to make them with a free hand, and by the eye, as it would be to no purpose to know geometry as well as Euclid, if one cannot design one's figures without compasses and rule; and this is acquired only by a habit contracted by seeing with precision and exactness. This is the fundamental basis of Design, without which the painter will never be able to do what he knows theoretically; for, as in painting we must express the forms, which we see in nature, as they present themselves to our sight, and as the beauty of forms depends on that little more or less which determines and decides their character, so by a little more or less one gives or presents a clear knowledge of the forms. Therefore, whoever wishes to excel in Design, must, in the first place, observe the form of the body he means to draw, and in the second, the manner in which it presents itself to our view. To the proper form of a body

belongs also the proportion of its parts, which is that analogy they have among themselves; and is commonly called Proportion. Of this I shall make a separate chapter when I come to speak of the proportions of the human body; therefore, I shall only say for the present, that in every entire body there is a general character, that is to say, an entire body is composed of either square, triangular, or round forms; and although these forms be varied in an infinite number of ways, yet they will always preserve that character which nature has given them, and which distinguishes them. Therefore those who wish to seek beauty in design, must consider well the characteristic form of each body, and give a clear representation of it in their work, without minding accidental minutiae; nor yet omit any thing ever so small, when it serves to the construction of the body. When I say minutiae, I mean accidental things; as for instance, if a tanned body had by accident a thick or round muscle, as may happen by the frequent use of such a part, or through the complexion, or some circumstance of the health of the person, the painter must not imitate it, but on the contrary, he must suppose that the man is uniform in all his parts, in order that he may not interrupt the general intelligence which he means to give of the figure of a tanned man. The same thing happens with a strong, light, fat, young, or old man. Whenever in a body of a determined character there is some part, although beautiful in the



extreme,) of a form and character different from the greater part of the other members which compose the whole, it would be a monstrosity to interrupt the general idea of the character of that body.

Besides, it is necessary to be attentive not to change, upon any account, the character, form, or proportion, which nature has given to any body whatever, or any of its parts; therefore, for instance, a muscle must never be reduced to a square or round form, since this would be changing nature and her determinate laws, and departing from probability: one may, however, give such a part or muscle more or less length. In the same manner if Nature has made one thing large, and another small, they must never be made equal, and much less the great small, or the small great. What I say of the general idea, and the character of a whole figure, I mean also of the square forms, or of others; but I do not pretend therefore that we must change the proper form of the muscles, and of the parts, but if that muscle is by its nature round, its facings must be made small, or its squarings the more angular, as all the other muscles are so, without however ceasing to appear round in comparison with the rest, which are of another figure.

In what respects the forms, it is also necessary the painter should consider that scarce any bodies are perfectly angular, or perfectly round, and that the variations of these forms cause a certain effect in paintings which

gives an idea of motion, flexibility, and of life. Each line has within itself the property of expressing a quantity of the body which it circumscribes; as, for instance, any straight line gives an idea of extension, or hardness; the curve, on the contrary, gives an idea of flexibility; the elliptic, placed horizontally, represents tender and moist bodies; those in the form of an S give an idea of life; and thus the other lines, according to the different manner in which they are employed, and the place they are in, have a different meaning.

Much might be said if I wished to speak of all the cases, in which a particular observation is requisite in each form, and of all that occurs in painting; however, I shall content myself with observing, that foreshortenings must be avoided, particularly in beautiful objects, which do not suffer that alteration of forms, which foreshortening produces; for a member, or a part foreshortened, is subject to a point of view; and if that is quitted, it appears false or deformed.

### III.

#### *Of Lights and Shades.*

That part of painting which is called *Clare Obscure*, or more properly the art of lights and shades, is of two kinds, like all the other parts of painting; that is to say, one necessary, and simply true; and the other probable, or ideal. However, before speaking of the

particular rules of lights and shades, it will be necessary to make the following observations. I. If there were no light, all bodies would be dark. II. Air is a mass intermixed with extraneous bodies. III. Light, in falling on a body, ascends, and produces what is called reflexion, or reverberation; and this happens more or less, according as the body is smooth or rough. IV. All convex bodies reflect the rays of light according to their being more or less curved, as if they were reflected from the centre of that form; and the concave unite them in the spot where the centre of their curve would be. V. On no smooth and flat body can light be seen, except where an angle is formed equal to the line or the visual ray of the person who looks at the said body. VI. In rugged and coarse bodies, which have a rough and porous surface, each of their particles is nevertheless more or less shining, and their light seems more dilated, for the rays are reflected on all sides of the surface, but on account of their smallness they are almost lost in air, and so form an ample, but weak light.

This part of painting is that which gives it most brilliancy when well understood. This is what renders a form easier to be understood, for the outline is only a kind of particular section; and a globe without lights and shades causes the effect of a disk.

After linear Perspective, lights and shades is the part which contributes most to make bodies

appear raised, and of various and distinct forms. Aërial perspective has also a share in the parts of lights and shades; and here it is necessary to mind, that in nature there is scarce any perfect angle, and her angles are only small curves, which end in two lines that widen themselves. Therefore, the painter who understands rightly the art of managing lights and shades, must get rid of geometrical angles, which lead him to a great harshness. Such angles can only suit some outlines that are very much enlightened; however, none must be made decided, nor with a tint that is truly luminous, but with a half tint, since it is impossible that the line which falls on the angle of a body, can reflect by an equal angle to our eyes from the last extremity of the outline; and if light were to produce this effect, we should see the whole object dark, and a very weak light in the outline: this case must not be supposed, and if it were to be, it would not produce any pleasure, for it would destroy the brightness of the object.

We must moreover consider, that all bodies being in part, or in the ground of their surface smooth, they reflect a part of the rays, and tinge again the nearest air with a light of their own colour. I have said all this only with the intention of persuading students that outlines ought to be soft and gentle, and that if we see some in nature which appear sharp, it arises from the enlightened bodies being infinitely distinguished from the body that is not enlightened, and that both are either true lights or real dark-

ness; which does not happen in painting, as has been said before.

If we consider the light which is in the contour of a figure, comparing it with that which is in the centre still more raised to our eyes, we shall always find two or three degrees difference. Therefore the painter must do the same, by putting a third colour in the contour to maintain the relief. Some eminent painters, in order to obtain at once both these effects, have made the just degradation in the principal body that is enlightened, and have given it for a ground an object that is dark and obscure by nature. This has been done repeatedly by Correggio. Therefore, whoever wishes to produce an effect of true relief in painting, or drawings, must previously examine what strength he can give to the form and the posture of the body, which he proposes to represent, and immediately he is to consider what direction the ray of light takes relative to the horizontal line which he light forms with the object. This observation will serve him to understand the effects of light on true objects, as well as to imagine those objects he does not see. He must then consider how an object is to be placed, whether it be flat or round, that it may receive more light, and reflect it back to the eye under an equal angle. Those considerations must be had in observing the plan and elevation of bodies.

The lights, or luminous bodies which we make use of in painting, are three: the Sun,

Fire, and Air. Painting often employs the last two ways; the one is called close light, and the other open light. Close light must be considered as if it were another new luminous body of the size of the window through which the light comes, and as if it were also at the same distance. This light is almost a reflected light; for, although the sun is on the opposite side out of the window, yet there comes something of his perfect light, and constantly; for which reason the painter must choose his light from the North. The open light of the air without sun is likewise of two kinds: the one when the sun is clouded, and its light pierces through, which produces a weak gleamets, but however always comes from where the sun is; the other when the sky is serene, and objects that are in the shade receive light from the ambient air; and the light seems to fall vertically on them. If a very remote object keeps the sun's rays from another, the light which it then gives is as if the weather were cloudy.

Of the light of the sun itself, it is almost useless to speak, it being impossible to imitate it well. I shall only say, that the sun's light admits no other degradation than the position of the body which receives it. The light from fire follows the same rule of the close light, its force being to be considered always according to its size; and the smaller the light is, the greater will its degradation be. The light of open air is the most unfavourable for a

punter, on account of all the body of the air being equally enlightened. Shadows are lost when the luminous body is small, that is to say, less than the enlightened, and the greatest part of this will be deprived of light, and the shadow which it produces in other objects, will keep widening as they go from the object which causes them. The shadow of those bodies which receive light from a window greater than those bodies, will become always narrower, and be lost sooner or latter according to the size of the light. The bodies which are in the open light without sun, have hardly any shadows, and only cause a very small privation of light to those objects which are near them; for the whole air is full of a dispersed light. The light of the sun is of an equal force on all sides, and shadows follow the direction of the body which produces them. It is also necessary to consider, that shadows are never entirely destitute of light, and that they are dark only in comparison to another greater light. The rays which come to our eyes by the reflection of an enlightened body, dazzle our eyes, so that they confound those objects which are in a less light. If that lesser degree of light, which we call shade in comparison to the greater light, becomes universal, as when a cloud covers the sun entirely from us, we then see the same bodies clear and distinct which seemed shaded, because there is no longer that light which dazzled us. The same thing happens when we keep off the light with our hand in order

to see dark objects better, and when we approach bodies that are not much enlightened we distinguish them better, because less light is interposed between us and those bodies, and our sight is not dazzled thereby. From thence the painter must infer, that near objects are distinguishable also in shadows, and therefore he must not make them as dark as those shadows which are at a great distance, and which are lost in a colour mixed with light and darkness, almost blue, on account of the enlightened bodies which are in the air interposed between our eyes and the dark place. Finally, the aerial perspective must be observed, which has its rules as the linear in what respects the diminution of the force of lights and shades. Let us for instance suppose a course of squares, a palm each, placed in perspective, on the first a figure, and on the second and third likewise; I say, that if on account of the proximity to the point of distance the second row diminishes by a third of the size of the first, the third will not diminish by a fourth of the second, and the others the farther they are from the eyes of the beholder the less will they vary from each other. Therefore the same thing happens in aerial perspective; for, if from the first to the second figure there is no degree of difference, from the second to the third there will be less, and the difference will be always smaller, as we observe in mountains and towns seen at a distance. A house which is near, differs infinitely in the strength of lights and shades and size from



another like it a mile difference; but if we see a town fifteen miles off, a house which is a mile farther differs almost nothing from one like it in the town; and the same happens with two hills that are seen at a great distance. I do not think it necessary here to give a scientific demonstration of it; experience, which shews the truth of it, being sufficient. The same degradation takes place in light; for instance, from the first to the second object there will be a degree of difference; from the second to the third in equal distance there will be much less; and still less from the fourth to the fifth. The degradation will be greater or less, according as the shining body is nearer, or further. If near, the degradation will be strong, because the first objects will receive a greater quantity of rays of light than the second, and the others which follow, because the lines of the rays become always more equal, and of a lesser angle as they go from the point of view: and when some shining body is very far, like the sun, then the rays are almost parallel, and differ so little in all the surface of the world enlightened at once, that the difference is imperceptible to our sight.

In general, there are two causes by which the most intense lights lose their force, and become extinct. The one is the distance from the shining body, and the other the distance from which we see objects. When these two circumstances combine in an object, then the body which we want to represent remains

very weak of lights and shades; for if it is far from the light, and near our eyes, the general clearness will be very weak; but its face will be seen with precision and clearness; as our eyes being near, they see *precisely* the point where that shining body is spread. But when an object is near the light, and far from our eyes, the general light will be strong; but its strength will be spread and confused in the mists of clearness; for that light being as only a point in the distance, it becomes extremely small, and is lost in the air before it comes to our eyes. The same happens with shadows, since those of bodies near our sight must be lighter, and the bodies will appear darker; and in places where light can penetrate, the shadows will be stronger, and more decided. On the contrary, the general shadows of objects distant from us must be darker; but the stronger and smaller situations must be confused in the general shade, untill a quantity of air is interposed, which weakens the darkness of the shades, and finally the colour likewise.

We must also consider that lights and shades constitute that part of painting which explains the forms and the means by which, on a flat and even surface, bodies appear as detached, and in relief. Bodies can have only three kinds of forms, being composed of surfaces, either right, curved, or of mixtilinear. The right can only be of one kind; but the curved may be concave, or convex, and the mixed are the most varied. If, therefore, the art of lights

and shades serves to explain the forms, it is necessary to consider, that curves must have no angle, that is, no diversity of degree of reflexion. Therefore those who seek to express by lights and shades such forms, must observe, that from the situation of the light to the half tint, and from this to shade, and from shade to reflexion, there must be no total diversity of tints, but the degradation must precede imperceptibly more or less, according to the nature of the curve which it represents. Angular bodies, or those composed of right lines, which is the same, ought to have their lights and shades of separate tints like their form, whose surface changes the direction instantaneously. Mixed bodies must be also mixed with these kinds of lights and shades.

#### IV.

##### *Of Colouring*

The art of colouring is that part which, in painting, serves not only to represent simply the universal appearance of coloured bodies, but also to make the beholder know their general and particular qualities; as for instance, if they are hard, moist, dry, or mixed with other qualities. The materials are the five before mentioned colours, white, yellow, red, blue, and black. The secondary colours, or first tints mixed from them, are orange, green, purple, grey, and brown; and each of these

colours is composed of two primary; but if a third be added, it loses all its beauty.

Nature has given us two kinds of colours, the transparent dark, and the diaphanous light. We have besides dark opaque colours, as lake, azure, ivory black, and others of the same kind; but these can never arrive at the opacity made with the transparent. The difference between a transparent and an opaque body is, that the rays of light enter and pass through the transparent body, not do they stop, or are they reflected on its surface, as happens in the opaque. A body of mixed parts opaque and diaphanous, receives the rays of light, but part of them remain on the surface, and part enter it and cover the whole body with a share of light, which then cause in it several colours, according as repeated angles of light are formed. Where the surface is imperfectly enlightened, we perceive by its transparency those internal parts from which light cannot be reflected to our eyes, and therefore it appears opaque: on the contrary, where the surface is divested of rays of light, we see through it that light which is spread in the body, and this effect encreases the liveliness of the colour.

The same thing happens in painting. When a clear colour is but lightly laid on a dark, it dims it, and makes it grey: on the contrary, a dark colour laid on a light encreases its lustre. For the preceding reasons, a semidiaphanous body never appears of a pure colour in the enlightened part, but in that where the rays of

light have penetrated it, without leaving the surface enlightened. Hence we must observe, that in order to represent delicate complexions, livid tints must be freely employed, and in a figure of such a complexion, pure tints must be employed only in those parts where the skin is drawn over the bones, for those bodies being in themselves white, and the skin transparent, the light passes through, and is received by the body which is under. When the light is very strong in those places where under the skin there is some solid fat, it also makes nearly a pure tint; inclining more or less to green, according as that fat is moister in those places covered by the white skin. In parts that are moist, the tint takes a bluish cast; the same thing happens when the blood is covered by a white skin sufficiently thick, to prevent the light from passing in such a quantity as to make the blood appear red, for then it performs the office of a black body; and the white which passes over it, not being perfectly compact, appears blue. When the blood is only covered by a transparent pellicle, it appears red in the surface, and when the skin is intersected by very small veins in its surface, or it passes over moist places, it occasions a purple tint.

By all I have said till now, the reasons of the different tints which are seen on the human body may be accounted for, and one may see how much one ought to observe this variety which discovers the proper quality of each part.

We must therefore observe in general, that when the upper surface is clearer by its nature than the body which is under it, it always appears as if mixed with dark particles, that is to say, black: on the contrary, if the surface is by its nature of a tint darker than the body under it, then the tints become purer, and more transparent than if it had under a body equal in darkness. Wherever flesh is covered by a thick skin, it must be less varied, as being a thicker and more transparent body to cover perfectly the other which is under.

In the chapter on lights and shades, I promised to teach the manner of making shadows appear more true than they generally are; therefore, I shall here begin to speak with the same order of nature, on the colours of shining bodies. What light is in itself, is one among the many things which remain concealed behind that veil which keeps from the minds of all men the knowledge of the first principles. We shall therefore content ourselves with speaking of its effects, as far as we can comprehend them by experience. It is probable, that light has no colour whatever; but as on coming to us it crosses intermediate bodies, it requires a colour, or is tinged by the refraction it makes from one body to another untill it reaches our sight. If the matter through which it passes, or which surrounds it, is mixed with it, be thin, uniform, and in small quantity, the light is clearer and less tinged, and receives more plentifully the first tints.

of colours; which is yellow, and plentifully also the second degree of colours, which is orange; then it admits red; finally, it receives blue, and is lost in darkness. From these causes arise the different colours of shining bodies. These, whether natural or artificial, give their colour to the bodies they shine upon; and the more times the rays of the said light are reflected and refracted, the more they augment their colours. That which receives light first is air, and must therefore be necessarily tinged with its colour; and the thicker the air is, the more it will be tinged. If the painter observes this well, he will avail himself of it much for the *accord* of the picture; since it gives him an opportunity of supposing a universal tint, which is mixed with all the colours, more or less, according to the quantity which he wishes to suppose of this tinged air interposed between its objects. He must moreover consider, that reflection not only brings with it the colour of the body first enlightened, but also part of the colour of the light; and this is also an advantage in composing the picture, and is very useful for the disposition of the colours of the drapery of which we shall speak hereafter.

There are two reasons for which we see the colour of a body; and without stopping to examine whether bodies are coloured by nature, or by the forms on which the rays of light make such an appearance, the painter must consider each body as if it had in itself that colour we see in it. The reason which renders it vi-

sible to us is, because the body receives the light; that is to say, being placed so, that the rays of light strike its surface; the more perpendicularly they fall, the more light they receive; and because the body is placed so that the light, which falls upon it, may reflect with an equal angle to our sight. The body which receives the light forms a shining mirror; and on the spot where we see the light stronger, more rays are collected, and are tinged with a colour like that of the shining body. If the body which receives the light be diaphanous, and of a smooth surface, we should see the light only on a point; but if it be rough and porous, we see the light spread for the reasons given in the chapter on lights and shades. In that porosity, light is reflected from one particle to another, and therefore we see its own colour more than that of the light. Where the ray falls in the smallest angle on the object, part of the colour of the body is lost, and a tint is formed and composed of darkness and the colour of the body. Finally, in those places where the light passes totally, because it cannot touch them, it would leave the body quite black if there were no light scattered in the air, and if the body did not receive any other reflected light. This last light will be tinged either of the colour of the shining body, or of the body which causes the reflexion mixed with its own colour, and with that of the light. The deepest shades ought to be of the colour of the tint of the general harmony,



because it is supposed that the air is already tinged with this; and the same is understood of all the drapery, and of all the other bodies. Therefore those who wish to paint the lights of bodies rightly as they are, and particularly flesh, must employ opaque colours, and impaste well their painting, that it may become a body fit to receive the light, and reflect it abundantly to the eyes.

I have placed the colours in the order which they arise from the light, beginning by white, yellow, red, and blue, and even to black. These matters, therefore, which are in their nature apt to receive the appearance of white, or of yellow, ought necessarily to have in themselves a portion of light, or that they be very apt to reflect the rays of light to our sight; and this cannot happen but by means of a quantity of particles thick, composed, heterogeneous, without following interstices, and deprived by these reasons of every kind of transparency; from whence we see that a glass, which is in its nature uniform, is for that reason transparent; but if it be pounded and reduced to very fine powder, it is no longer transparent, and appears white, until a body actually diaphanous, such as oil, is mixed with it, because then it acquires again part of its transparency, on account of the oily substance which is introduced, and perfectly insinuates itself among its particles, being uniform and transparent. This is, in general, the reason why oil gives a certain transparency to

colours, because being of a humid substance, which insinuates and thickens without being exhaled, it leaves its particles among the colours.

A body is diaphanous when the light passes it without remaining on the surface. If a colour is of a very porous nature, and of small particles, so that many particles enter into every particle of its matter, this then is called a rich colour; and for that reason it requires a great quantity of these colours to produce the same effect which few of those colours give which we call body colours, that are in their nature more composed, or dense; from whence one does not mix so much oil with these as with the others, and the light which strikes upon such bodies is reflected to our sight. By that is clearly inferred in what consists the transparency of colours, and that to paint very oily will only be prejudicial; because oils, after some time, are exhaled and dissipated, and finally show the colours that are under, and which were covered by the density of the oil; and so much the more if in beginning of a painting one makes use of light and rich colours: and this has destroyed many beautiful paintings, as one might see in many of the Venetian school, the first who introduced very oily painting, and particularly Tintoretto. By the same means many beautiful paintings of the Carraccis have been destroyed; and for that reason, I advise painters to use canvass prepared with very clear colours thus to avoid their paintings turning dark. Thus we see that

Titian, Rubens, and Vandyke did, who almost always painted very lightly, availing however of clear preparations; so that their paintings are well conserved, and perhaps more lucid than they were when fresh painted.

It is necessary, therefore, to impaste well with colour, not very oily, and clearly placed, following the proper direction of each form of all the work the first or second time that one goes over the painting; because, when one sketches it is the time when one has to think of the principal masses, and *tout ensemble* of a work; and the second time one might place more particular attention to each part, observing notwithstanding to maintain the work always from the beginning with light, soft, and harmonious tints; that is to say, of cinder colour, to be able then to increase, reinforce, and revive at times and places the colours which one would wish to make most lucid. Proceeding the contrary way, it is easy to fall into a crude style. At the end of a work one might use rich colours to make some light retouches, and to veil the shade of objects nearest the sight; and this will contribute very much also to make the shade appear true, by the reason that transparent colours let the rays of light pass in a manner that they rest not upon the surface, but reflect themselves to our sight, so that it does not appear illuminated, but truly shady, although very light. In this manner one might distinguish two shades of different distance, although they be of the same degree

of obscurity, by placing nearest to our sight rich and transparent colours, and most remote opaque colours, which, in receiving the light, have the effect of intermediate air. It is necessary also to observe, not to make all bodies of rich colours, because those which are in Nature opaque, ought not to be painted rich.

It now remains to speak of each colour in particular; that is, of the situation it receives by means of clare obscure. I would therefore begin by white. White in the light remains white, because as that tinges the object or white drapery, thus it will also tinge the white of a painting. The second tint ought to be of a colour rather blue, to make the light appear tinged by the luminous body. In the third tint one ought to mix a grey, something tinted with the colour of the general harmony, obscuring it proportionably in the shade; but one ought to make the reflexions of the colour of duplicated light. One should therefore endeavour to avoid the occasions of making the shades of a white cloth more obscure than another whose colours are in their nature more obscure. This is in general a rule; for there are sometimes occasions when it is inevitable. That which I say of a white cloth is to be understood also of white flesh, in which it is necessary besides to maintain the shade clear and lucid; and since white excludes equally the three colours, yellow, red, and blue, their shades ought to preserve the same character, without inclining to any of the aforesaid colours,

unless it be for evident reasons of some reflection. This is a general rule for all bodies which are painted, and which ought always to preserve in the shade the same characters which they have in the light.

Yellow is the most clear colour after white. Perfect yellow is that which neither partakes of green or of golden colour. This colour, as soon as it loses part of its light, loses also its beauty, because it is in itself lucid; to the contrary, in the reflections of its proper colour it becomes very lively, because it receives the light voluntarily, and reflects it strongly, since light always inclines to that colour, and augments in its reflections. Red is the most lively colour, and enters in all colours. The most perfect is that which is at an equal distance from the golden and violet. This colour is easily corrupted in lights and shades, but if it be mixed with yellow light, it easily receives it. This colour which makes most brilliancy, and most strongly by day; but by night (I shall presently give my reasons) its shades become very dark, and receive with difficulty the reflections of other colours.

Blue is the third colour, and almost the last degree of light, because it approaches darkness. Its clears generally come spotted by the colour of light. The reflections of its proper matter, are more beautiful than its clears, because they receive grace from that little yellow of light. Its shades are more powerful, but are easily stained, and voluntarily receive the reflection

of other colours, but is not easily reflected to other bodies, if the light be not very lively. Black, in painting, represents darkness; but when it receives light it is easily tinged with the colour of light, and in the same shade quickly receives the reflections of other colours.

### V.

#### *Of Harmony:*

The use of the aforefaid colours belongs to that part of painting which is generally, although, according to my opinion, improperly called Harmony. Harmony appertains to those things which have measure, be it of time, quantity, extension, or any other dimension, that can produce a correspondence of one part with another\*. To find then harmony in colours, it would be necessary to determine and give a number to each colour; which thing would be very abstruse, and almost impossible; because, supposing that one would wish to number the degrees of the angles of refraction that the rays of light form in the prism, it

\* Without pretending to oppose this opinion of Menges, I believe there is true harmony in colours. A ray of light can cause in our optic nerve a strong or a weak sensation, and another ray can at the same time produce another sensation which moderates and moderates the first, so that either of these two sensations will be sometimes in itself alone disagreeable, by vibrating our organs more or less than is necessary, yet will have a good effect together, the one correcting the excess and defects of the other; as two sounds opposed in a certain proportion come in the ear that grateful thing which is called *Harmony*.

would be an immense study, and at the same time it would alienate from a painting, and be useless to painters. A painter therefore ought to consider that that which we call harmony is not properly serving of this metaphor, to denominate in our art that which in Italian one calls *accordo*, which produces in painting the same effect of harmony in music. Supposing that harmony has that effect in music which is commonly attributed to it, the sweetness and acuteness of colours will depend upon the natural effect which they occasion to our sight, or in the optic nerves. The most clear colours have more force than the most obscure, because their luminous rays, striking the visual nerves, cause in part the same effect of a direct light, by filling all the internal of the eye with light, occasioning by much force a painful sensation to the eye. Obscure colours have not this effect, because they do not reflect all the rays of light with the same force. Clear colours being then the most apt to give sensations to our eyes, they ought to be employed where it is required that the eye of the spectator fix itself, and may observe and feel that that is the part which the painter has wished to indicate as the most principal and noble. If the sensation ought to be soft, as in graceful subjects, it is necessary to keep the sight of the spectator as long as one can in that sensation, and that he might lose it by degrees; that is, that from the clear colours it should pass to the half tint and not to the obscure, and from thence to the

obscure, and gradually to the most obscure, without, however, ever rapidly passing from the obscure to the very obscure. To the contrary, if the subject be of a harsh nature, such ought to be also the choice of the effects of the painting, operating in a contrary manner to the antecedent.

Pure and brilliant colours, which have more force than dead colours, ought to be employed in the most noble part of a painting, and used in greater or less quantity, according as the subject is required to be lively, soft, or melancholy. Every colour can be tempered by white and black, putting them in a manner which leaves few parts illuminated, because in shade every colour degenerates and becomes dark. Red always remains harsh when it is used pure; unless in painting velvet of a rich colour, which mitigates its crudeness, and causes the rays of light not to reflect with so much force to the eye. It is likewise necessary that a painter should observe of what nature is the colour of the general harmony; because supposing it be reddish, he should employ a red colour in the figures of the second and third stage; and he will be able to place blue in the situation nearest to the eye, and to proceed in the rest with the same reasonings, in case the general tints be different. It is very seldom however that red makes the general harmony, because that is the colour which most reflects upon all the rest. Of mixed colours, the gilded is the most harsh, being composed of



one of the most clear colours, and another of the most pure. Green is the most pleasing, being composed of the most clear colour and the most obscure, from whence it moves the nerves of the eye, without fatiguing them. The violet is the most powerful of mixed colours, because it is composed of the most pure and most dark, and for that reason causes a lugubrious sensation.

From what I have said until now, one might perceive with facility the manner of varying colours, and of employing them with reason. Not to be more tedious, I shall omit other things, and only say that to felicitate the mode of regulating the equilibrium of colours in a painting according to the character that one would wish to give, one might consider what I have said from the beginning of the five kinds of materials which we have to express all the objects that nature presents, which are the five colours. Among these, two are lucid, two obscure, and one in the medium, which I have called the most pure, because it does not appertain either to light or darkness, but receives and reflects equally the one and the other. The painter avails of these materials, and employs more or less the one and the other to express distinct characters, by different sensations which they produce in our sight. If a painter finishes a painting of only simple white and black, it will remain a lifeless piece, because it will be uniform; as white and black exclude every other colour; one in light, and the other

darkness; but if he avails himself of these two proportionably, according to the idea which he would wish to render comprehensible, by adopting the most black, or the most white, and the half tint, he will cause, notwithstanding the uniformity of the character of these two colours, a varied sensation. Approaching the two extremes, it will be powerful and harsh: placing between the one and the other a great interval of half tint it will be more soft; and placing always each degree by the side of that which goes next, and by making it visible only as much as is sufficient to distinguish objects, such a work will become very soft. Separating the clears in a mass from the other clears, and the obscures from the other obscures, it will remain majestic and grand, and finally adapting thus, and mixing infinitely these means, it will cause a lively, dead, soft, harsh, tender, or whatever other sensation one would wish the spectators to feel. If to these, colours be added with the same reasonings, one shall be able infinitely to augment with them the significations and sentiments which one would wish to produce; but it is necessary that the painter has care not to repeat many times the same lights and shades in force and greatness, and to endeavour to avoid the extremes; attending always to truth, and verisimilitude; remembering always that clare obscure is the basis of that part of painting which is commonly called harmony, and that colours are but the tones which characterise the species of bodies; and

for that one ought to employ them with uniform reason to the general character, and clear obscure.

In the use of colours, it is likewise necessary to observe their equilibrium, to find the mode of employing them with grace, and of accompanying them well. Colours, properly speaking, are three; yellow, red, and blue, and these should never be used alone in a work, and if it occurs to employ any one that is pure, one should seek the manner of placing with it another mixed of two; as for example, if one employs pure yellow, one should accompany it by the violet, because this is composed of red and blue mixed together: and if one uses pure red, one should add for the same reason green, which is a mixture of blue and yellow: but the union of yellow and red which form the third mixture is difficult to employ well, because they are too lively, by reasons aforesaid; from whence it is necessary to add to them, or accompany them by blue. These colours employed in the aforesaid mode in greater or lesser quantity, will serve to give the character to the thing one would wish to represent; but one should always observe, to use in a painting very few pure colours, and those sufficiently lively. One might accord all colours to white and black. White takes from their harshness, and renders them tender; and black deadens them, and obscures them. Those composed of two of the primitive colours one might soften and weaken with a little of the third primitive co-

four. • That which I have said, serves not only in making the drapery, but also in the flesh, and the fields, beginning by regulating oneself always according to the principal parts, which one has to accord to all the others.

## VI.

### *Continuation of harmony and colouring.*

Harmony, in a painting, is that effect which pleases the eye, the same as harmony in music pleases the ear.

In the antecedent paragraph, I have spoken of five colours; differing much from the principles of Newton, who assigns seven, because I have thought it more convenient to speak according to the reasons I have acquired from the experience and practice of my profession; and by that I say, that the principle colours are three, yellow, red, and blue. The colour of Aurora, or the gilded colour, is composed of yellow, and of red; the violet, of porperry, red and blue; and the green of yellow and blue; from whence I conclude that these are tints, and not colours.

White, and black, are necessary to make the three colours more clear, or more obscure; because otherwise they would not be sufficient to compose the variety which is necessary in a great work of painting; as one could not play a Sonata on the harpsicord in one sole octave. White and black serve therefore to make the harmony more pleasing, or more grave. To obtain the direct harmony of a painting, it is necessary that the painter makes it in such a

manner that there might be an equal quantity of all the colours, as well of the simple as the composed; and all the difficulty of composing a work of grand and beautiful taste consists in knowing how to find the situations where to place the said colours.

One has to regulate the general harmony of a painting always according to the general tint which the light gives it. If, for example, it be illuminated by the light of the sun, it is necessary to maintain the harmony with the tone of the light, which is yellow, because that will tinge with its colour all the things illuminated by its direct light, and the things reflective will be illuminated by the bodies which receive the light from the first luminous body; and its colour is no longer simple, because the interposed air is already tinged with the first light. In the same manner things which diminish by degradation, and are lost in the air, one loses in the same tone, because all the atoms of the interposed air are tinged with the same colour. Shade partakes of the same tint, for two reasons: the first, because all shade is reflective, otherwise it would be perfectly dark; that is to say, pure black, and without colour; and the second, because, if that could happen, it would be necessary that this darkness should partake more or less of the general tone, because the air which passes over, or to say better, between the eye and the object which one sees, will make a kind of veil to the tone of the general harmony. In the same

manner, when a painting has to represent illuminated objects of a day without sun, or to give the light of the pure air of some window situated towards the west, the harmony will be blue; and one ought to observe the same rule aforesaid; and thus one has to proceed with the other lights, being either of the east or west, &c. In all harmony, one ought to observe particularly those colours which are most opposite to the tone of the harmony, and to place such colours in the foreground, in order that they may appear thus more advanced, and more separated; but by that is understood in uniting them with others by the same gradation as I have said before; and thus the colour which will most accord with the general harmony, ought to be placed in the last stage, because by itself, it will be lost in the totality.

For this disposition, it is necessary that the painter should make a particular study of the dignity and quality of colours; from whence it will be understood, that when, for example, I say that yellow is a colour in its nature luminous, it is a reason for placing it where one would wish the light to shine, according to the rules which I shall give in the following paragraph. The obscure colours are more proper than the light to be put in the foreground, because air illuminates all dark colours, and for the same reason it might be understood that the painter had supposed little air between the eye and the object represented; this one cannot demonstrate with so much evidence in clear

things, because all the clare which one makes in a painting, will always appear weak in comparison to natural light; and for that reason able artists have always made in the foreground of their paintings some obscure mass in the first stage.

Red is the most lively colour, but at the same time, it is the least fine; because by its nature it has no connection either with light or darkness: it admits however of the one and the other, losing its purity as I have said above. It is necessary to place it where one would wish to make the parts most brilliant, and most advanced, because, from its nature one cannot place it much behind, without mixing it with the violet and gilded colour. If one would wish to place it in a luminous part of the painting, one should do it without mixing it with white, otherwise it will always remain opaque, red, and ordinary.

Blue is a colour in its nature opaque, and one has to place it in an obscure situation of the composition; and then it is proper to guard it by mixing it with white, which would always produce a colour of air, and which, in place of advancing, would restrain it, and destroy the force of its quality.

For the same reason one might employ the golden colour in luminous and advanced situations.

Green is the most soft colour, because it is composed of a luminous and a dark colour, and for that reason it forms a very grateful half

tint. The two extremes, that is, white and black should be employed, the one and the other in the same manner, because they destroy all colours, not having any colour natural to themselves, and for that reason they might serve the judicious artist to combine the most contrary colours. One might adduce many examples upon that, but I shall choose only two of the most significant. Rembrandt has given to shade the most incompatible colours, leaving only one place illuminated with these colours, separating the one from the other; and when the composition obliged him to bring them near, he illuminated artificially the one, and obscured the other; because, if he had placed them conjunctively, he would not have represented that light and shade according to the rules of *claire obscure*. Barroccio, to the contrary, has given to his paintings an agreeable harmony, by illuminating all the colours with white, which took from them all their vigor; and by these means his paintings had a very raised *claire obscure*. Finally, to give an idea of the taste of these two painters, I say, that Rembrandt has painted all his subjects as if he had seen them in a cave, where only enters a little ray of the sun to enliven his harmony; and without giving more light than was necessary to distinguish one colour from another. Barroccio, to the contrary, appears to have seen his history in the air, and the clouds, where, between the light and reflections, he left scarcely any shade, and by the abundance of the *claire*



obscure he formed only a resplendant painting.

According to this, I believe the judicious painter ought to employ these two different tastes, each according to its place; but between the two extremes, it appears to me, that Rembrant surpasses Barroccio; because one might find his taste in nature, and that of Barroccio is only in imagination; and whatsoever thing one feigns, should be formed in truth; because, as Horace says,

*Pieta voluptatis causa sint proxima veris.*

I have said, that with three colours one forms all tints. Pure colours are more worthy, and of more vigour than composed colours; and for that reason it is necessary to place them in a situation that one would wish to make most visible, and most conspicuous in a work, and to have care not to put them in the ground of a painting, or in a group. Two pure colours never agree well together; because, as every beauty is nothing more than a hidden variety, of course, in two pure colours it requires a third to unite them. Likewise three simple colours will never have a pleasing effect, but will, notwithstanding, be less disagreeable than two only. This is to be understood in general of colours that have the same degree of force and purity; because, as I have said before, making one thing all clear, and another all obscure with white and black, will form a clear obscure, but not harmony.

It is therefore necessary to unite colours well, and to observe, that of three colours, two should be mixed to make the composition, and the third should be left pure: by this method it will have union and variety. If it were necessary to employ two only, the third should be mixed with the two. For example, the violet and the yellow will be always well united if one changes the violet with the blue. If one puts a deep rose colour much charged with yellow, it will make a greenish colour. The rose and the green united together will go pretty well. One may also employ blue and the golden colours; but with the remembrance that the rose colour and yellow are too lively, in comparison to the blue, which is almost obscure; from whence it is necessary to deaden the liveness of the golden colour, to equilibrate the shade of the blue. For that reason blue, which partakes of green, and cinabar that make a kind of aurora, go very well together; and by this rule one might alter ~~soberly~~ all colours, in a manner that may appear neither crude or harsh. In this rule is not to be comprehended only the drapery, and the other things tinted, but also the ground, fields, and the flesh.

I recommend painters always to decide and complete the principal things before the others, and to remember that rules serve to explain the beautiful of nature, and not the contrary. A painter should read and study well the history of the subject he would represent,

to know what light, what time, what day, and what personages he has to put in his scene, and in what age is the event; because it would be very improper to paint a king in old clothes, or of mix'd colours, after the manner of an harlequin; and it would be equally improper to paint a girl in brown clothes, or a boy with strong colours, or a hero in rosy colours; or the soldiers flogging Christ in the uniform of French soldiers, and in hats after the Prussian mode; or a philosopher with clothes of sparkling and lively stuff, and of colours soft and transparant. Finally, it would be improper to paint a council or a feast of the Gods by imitating the colouring of Rembrant; as it would be absurd to represent Eneas in Hell after the taste of Barroccio: because a melancholy subject ought to cause sadness in him who views it, and of course it ought not to be compos'd of lively and cheerful colours. In subjects opposite to these, one ought to use simple and obscure colours, and the light ought not to appear of a cheerful day, or of a pleasing harmony; the clares ought to be concentr'd in one place only, nor ought to be complicated or dispers'd, as I shall explain elsewhere.

## VII.

### *Of Composition.*

Composition requires many things. First, it is of advantage that the painter knows how to imagine well the history, after having read it many times until he has learnt it by heart. Nor

ought he to content himself with only chosen passages, but he ought to study the entire history, in order to know the characters of all the persons which he has represented; this he cannot know without examining all their lives to judge with what view the action was done which is to be represented; because a bad man might do a good action; but the painter ought notwithstanding to make appear his character, be it in the figure, or countenance of the person, showing the reasons which operated him. It is necessary also to refer to the time, place, and customs of the people that are represented, and to give them the proper dresses of the nation and age in which they lived; and in case he cannot find monuments in books to make it known to him, he should endeavour to know the nations from whom they have taken their customs, laws, and arms; or at least the nations remote or near, from whence they have drawn their customs, such as the Greeks from the Egyptians, or the Romans from the Greeks, &c; and for that reason, one has to read authors who treat of their principal passions, to form a true idea of the persons. One might also on some occasions draw useful conclusions from present customs; because in general all nations agree in the foundation of human nature, and confronting present customs with those of the ancients we find they seldom differ entirely. It is likewise necessary to denote the country by the trees, climate, rivers, seas, or by the edifices of its architecture, or by its particular taste in the

arts; because it would be an extravagance to put the Apollo of Belvedere in an edifice of Babylon, or a modern figure in a martyrdom of a saint a thousand years ago.

It is also necessary to think of the particular situation, and that the light of the place agrees with the subject, and to make the furniture and interior architecture which is proper to the same subject, and to consider generally that the world has not been entirely the same in the time of Cain and Enoch, as it is at present; and that then they did not build of the composed order, and that ornaments and luxuries were not then in use; and finally, one has to know in what age the arts and sciences have been invented, or when they have been introduced into a country: when they have flourished and enjoyed the highest point of perfection, and when they began to decay, until they precipitated themselves into barbarity.

It now only remains to speak directly of the rules of the composition of the figures. The rules to be observed in each figure, are principally the contrast and contraposition of the members, the expression, convenience, quality, and age of the persons.

Contrast, or be it contraposition of the members, signifies that if one would wish to advance an arm, one ought to retract the leg from the same side, and also the other arm ought to be drawn back, and the leg of that side ought to be advanced. The two arms ought not to be equally advanced, because one

cannot draw back the two legs at once without making the figure fall. The head ought to incline to that side where the arm is raised, and to turn to that part where the hand is most advanced.

No member should form a rectangle; nor should ever two members have the same parallel between them. One hand ought never entirely to meet with the other, and no extremity ought to be in a line perpendicular and horizontal with the other; nor should one find a foot and two hands, the feet and one hand to form a direct line: this would be a great error.

A group is an union of figures, which ought all to tie one with another. They ought to be composed of an unequal number, as of 3, 5, 7, &c. Of all equal numbers those which are composed of two unequal are the most admissible; but one can never use doubled pairs with grace. Those of the first order are, for example, 6, 10, 14, &c. the others 4, 8, 12, &c. Each group should form a pyramid, and at the same time it should be of a rotund form as much as is possible in its relief. The greatest mass ought to be in the middle of the group, endeavouring always to place the little parts at the edges in order that the group may become more light and pleasing. It is also necessary to seek to give profundity proportioned to the field of the group; that is, not to place the figures in a file, in order that it might produce a pleasing air, from the variety of the greatness of the forms;

and from the play and accidents of the clare obscure, which one always meets on like cases. One ought equally to observe, as I have said above, that there be never many extremes in a direct line, either horizontal, perpendicular, or oblique; that no head be horizontal or perpendicular with another; that no extremities, such as heads, hands, feet, &c. can form a regular figure, so well as triangular, square, pentagonal, &c.; that two members have never an equal distance between them, nor that there be two members, two legs, or two arms of the same figure in equal foreshortening; finally, that no member be repeated; and if one shows any exterior part by the right-hand, it is necessary to discover the inward part by the left-hand, and to endeavour always to show the most beautiful parts, which are generally speaking, all the joints, such as the neck, shoulders, elbows, ~~hips~~, hip, knees, tibia, spinal and breast. The separts are beautiful, for two different reasons; because, in the extremities one might show much expression and science; and the others, such as the back and breast of a man, are the most grand, and beautiful to unite in a group a great mass of the same pleasing colour, as is the flesh colour; and to give a grateful repose to the sight either in the clare or obscure. In women, all naked parts are pleasing to be seen, as well before as behind, excepting those parts which decency requires to be hidden. It is notwithstanding necessary to be known, that hiding some parts with artifice augments their beauty

and grace; because, it is certain that a breast not entirely discovered appears much better than that which is fully in view, and the same happens in the other parts, which, hidden, have more grace than if entirely seen: from whence he who discovers nakedness more than decency, excites in spectators only lasciviousness, without gaining esteem; because the art does not depend upon these things. The reason why a naked women in a painting please more than men, are two: The first, is that their complexions are more agreeable, and the clear obscure appears more rotund, and of course the masses are more graceful; and for this reason it will always appear better in a beautiful youth than in a robust man. The second reason is, because it is more easy to see women naked in a painting than in nature; for which reason they appear more ideal than the bodies of men which we are at liberty to see when we please. There is also a third reason which every one may imagine.

If it be necessary to put more groups united, one observes the same rule which I have given for a group of an unequal number of figures; that is, to consider to place an unequal number of groups; in case, however, that this number of groups or pyramids had not place on account of the painting not being sufficiently large, one might make an intire group, and two halves at the other sides, taking care to observe the laws preteribed in the profundity and number of figures. The principal figure ought al-



ways to be in the middle of the group ; and if many are equally principals one ought to seek to place the whole near the centre ; and always in the second stage, and never in the first, in order that one might see them surrounded by the other objects, and raise them by means of clear obscure and perspective. It is also necessary that the composition in general forms always a semicircle, be it concave or convex, because both the principal and most brilliant one can place in a commodious style in the centre.

One ought likewise generally to have regard to the variety ; that is, to show the most beautiful parts of the subject in general, and of the figures, however without adopting the defect of showing always certain parts, and hiding others. Variety is a thing very essential, and to follow it, one ought to have care to show all the most beautiful parts of the subject, and of each figure in particular, but without falling into the opposite error. When one can, one ought to place in a composition persons of both sexes, and of every age, which will produce a pleasing variety in the expression and action ; and one should likewise see that they have symmetry and equilibrium between one part of the painting and the other, but without loading weight upon weight, or weight against weight in an horizontal or perpendicular line.

## VIII. .

*Of Grace.*

It is almost impossible to define Grace; and for that reason I shall speak of it only in describing the effects which it produces in the arts. It is certain, that it does not consist in colours, forms, or in clare obscure, taking each of these things separately; although it is in all these things united together, in a manner, that if one fails there is no longer Grace. Many confound grace with beauty, which is only a part that resides in the forms, as we know there can be beautiful forms without grace. Others, with equal equivocation, place it in harmony, which has only connection with colours, and is the last part, because it requires clare obscure to render it visible. Nor does grace consist in clare obscure, because the function of that is to show the waving or the relief of things. Notwithstanding, we know that without these three things, one cannot obtain grace in painting, and much less without variety; and for that reason we see, that however beautiful a thing may be, if it be without variety, it cannot have grace; from whence beauty is a quality subordinate to grace.

Grace, therefore, according to my opinion, is of two kinds; one natural and simple, and the other composed. That of the first kind one might find in all things, and goes with

beauty; the other results from the union of various things, which have the first grace in themselves, and form with said union a third thing, which is neither beauty or harmony, and which enchants, by reducing all the rest to accessory parts.

I shall not say more of its essence, and proceed to explain how a painter might acquire it. All things which we can paint have form, colour, and of course clear obscure, or light and shade; to represent them therefore gracefully, it is necessary to give to each of these parts much variety, and in this manner they will acquire grace; observing, however, not to give an equal variety to each of these parts, because it would then cease to be true variety, and would be deficient in the true fundament of grace.

This one might prove by sketching a simple outline, or letter, because, varying it in force and delicacy, it will have a grace which is not in its form, as one might see by writing letters in a beautiful hand, but of lines of equal force and thickness. Of course grace principally consists in variety.

This variety renders also new things pleasing, which after one is accustomed to them, do not delight so much, losing the merit of variety, and for that reason, old people are less sensible of the pleasure of novelty, because having seen so much, they no longer, or very rarely, find variety.

To give, therefore, this grace to painting, and to please our senses by its means, it is necessary to present variety to the eye; because in this manner it will give to the spectator the pleasure of novelty, making him forget one thing to learn another; and taking from him the disgust produced by continuation, and making him observe the most remarkable things in variety itself, as we see happens in a bunch of flowers, in which a rose, for example, is distinguished among many other little flowers, which, for an instant, make one forget the greater ones, and the eye passes from one to another object, always enjoying the novelty, by the variety of the different things which each has in its natural grace.

## IX.

*Of Grace in Contour.*

The Grace of Contour consists in that which we call Elegance, and which is easily united to the variety of the forms. One might find elegance also where there is not correctness, because the first belongs to beauty, and the second to grace.

To explain this, I will adduce examples of three famous painters, Correggio, Carravaggio, and Rubens, who are in equal degree distant from rigorous beauty, or at least from correctness; but with regard to grace and elegance, they differ infinitely. Carravaggio had neither variety or correctness; and for that reason his

design is worth nothing. Rubens was destitute of beauty and every correctness, but had more variety than Carravaggio, and for that reason he is more tolerable. Correggio, in spite of some little incorrectness, possessed such variety, elegance, and grace, as to do away that defect; and with these advantages he has produced a particular taste in design, which would be the most noble and most beautiful, if he were not inclined a little to uniformity; and this was the part which the Carracci's most adopted.

It is necessary, therefore, in design, to separate elegance from grace, because grace consists in the union of elegance with variety; and if one of these two things be wanting, there can be no grace. Elegance consists in avoiding all extremes in the forms, and in a certain equilibrium in the concave and convex contours. Rubens used too much the convex lines, which rendered his forms heavy and ordinary. Correggio, to the contrary, united the concave and convex contours with such proportion, that he attained the highest excellence and lightness. Carracci in imitating him, knew not how to maintain that equilibrium, and inclined too much to the convex.

All these observations one might make upon the ancient statues, and without going out of the Pharnacian palace, considering the different taste which there is between the famous Glicon Hercules, and the other which is by his side, and between the original parts of the first, and those which have been modernly restored. One

might make the same observations in the Flora of the same palace, and the Commodus, which wants every elegance. The Hercules, which is of the sublime taste, in spite of his size and force, appears very light when viewed at a distance, and the other statues, although not so large and thick, appear heavy and ordinary. These same reflections one might repeat in seeing the other statues of the first order, as the Apollo, the Laocoon, &c. and here one might know the difference between the Grecian taste, and that which is called Roman, in which is always found a kind of harshness, and want of elegance.

If Domenichino had possessed that part, he would have been most excellent; but the privation of elegance is a great injury to him. Raphael would have been elegant in the highest degree, if he had maintained a little more rotundity; that is, if in some parts he had not enghthened too much the straight lines: he was, however, famous in the proportion of the variety of the lines, and without that imperfection he would have been equal to the ancients of the first rank. From the same cause it arises, that he was less happy in the figures, and less delicate in his women and children; and to the contrary, he was admirable in the nervous nature of his old people, philosophers, apostles, &c. but when he wished to be graceful, he fell into rotundity and planes. Michael Angelo ought not to be cited in this article of elegance, because he did not know it; and

since those who pretend to imitate him, are in that more defective than him, it is useless to mention them. One has to remark, as a general rule, that without variety one cannot produce elegance; and although any one may wave well, if he does not equilibrate his waving, in the rest of the forms he will never attain that intent; and this was the capital defect of Rubens. In short, any form repeated too many times destroys elegance; and to the contrary, one shall attain it by changing the forms before they are perfectly finished; because if they were finished, they could certainly make variety, but not elegance. So that, in wishing to make a round form, for example, before completing the half circle, it will be necessary to twist a little the curve, and to terminate it by making an obtuse angle. In nature, which the painter avails of, nothing is perfectly round or square, and all is a continued alternative of figures.

The other circumstance which corresponds to the contours, regards composition, which I shall explain in that article.

## X.

### *Of Grace in Clare Obscure.*

Grace having stability in elegant variety, we shall see how it ought to enter in clare obscure. Even in clare obscure, it has been said to be from the masses of light and shade being of different force and grandeur. Making them in

this manner, they will be able to produce variety, and of course grace. I shall give some detail of this subject.

One should always have care to choose a principal light, and to place it in that situation which one would wish to be most conspicuous and brilliant, and to have care that all the painting has not a similar light of equal force, and observing the same in shade, one shall attain much of grace in all the work.

This done, one might distribute the half tints in different degrees, in a manner that they might serve to make the two aforesaid greatest extremes resplendent, and one should be attentive not to let one's self be puzzled by a certain false brilliant clare obscure which has deceived many painters; because by much relief and force in things, that is, making violent contrasts, and joining two extremes, such as the greatest clare and the greatest obscure, one destroys all grace, and the effect of the half tint, and that which is more, the grace of the same colouring; because, as I have said, the two extremes, white and black, are not true, and to give grace to a painting, it is necessary that all the things which are in a painting be more or less visible, in order that it might have a perfect variety, in which consists grace; and this is not to be obtained without a great attention to the gradations of the clares and obscures.

One has also to observe the value of the colours, as has been said in the article of colour-



ing, because all clares being more pleasing than obscures, one ought not to destroy the grace of a countenance, or of a clear drapery, by opposing it to a strong obscure with the view of giving it greater force, as so many painters generally do, and as Guercino did. It is therefore necessary in every thing to preserve its character and proper value, and even to give to the clear flesh a correspondent shade; and for a ground, things also more gradated; preserving thus, union with variety, because it would be ridiculous to make a white coat with the shades all black, that colour not being able to change its nature, or to alter its natural clare or obscure.

The first reason why clear things please, comes from Nature itself. Clare resembles light, of which we avail much: from whence painters, who are gloomy in their works, are also so in their ideas and characters, because all that is in their nature.

It is therefore necessary to give to paintings all the cheerfulness one can; and if necessity obliges one to represent some melancholy subject with an open air, one ought to make the light come much from the side, in order that it might produce much shade.

In short, without expression one cannot have propriety; without propriety, not beauty; and without beauty one cannot give grace; from whence if one designs a woman like a man, however beautiful it may be, it will not have propriety, nor beauty suitable to the object, nor grace.

## XI.

*Of Grace in Composition.*

I have many times said that in all parts variety forms Grace; now I shall explain how one may attain that variety in Composition. It is necessary first to consider, that variety ought to go conjunctively with other things which I have said to be necessary for good Composition, and by observing which, no impediment will be found to variety, because our art is very liberal, and one might profit from all things. All the errors of many painters who know not how to unite reason with taste, arise from their applying themselves more to accessory parts than to principals. To avoid this they should have care to dispose of the principal figure always first, and to give it all the nobleness and propriety which its character deserves. From thence they should proceed to dispose of the principal figures of each group, and each figure in particular, seeking not to make any inferior thing, if something of more consequence remains to be done. By this method they will enable their genius to conceive all the parts with distinction, and to know more easily if they have fallen in any error or repetition. This done, let them examine all the work, to see if they have observed all the rules established in composition, and certainly they will find comprised there propriety and necessary variety, because all things depend one upon the other.

In all paintings one has to endeavour as much as possible, to introduce every age, sex and estate, and the different impressions which external things can produce : in this manner one shall attain propriety, and with that variety, beauty, and finally grace. If to this be added, giving to each figure the dresses which correspond to their estate, sex, and age, with observing the rules of clear obscure, design, &c. there will be in the painting a wonderful variety of particular beauties, whose union will comprehend the most beautiful spectacle, and most perfect grace. With regard to propriety, I have to say, that if it occurs to be able to paint any object which in itself has not grace, it is necessary to procure it by making beautiful and most conspicuous the parts which are most necessary. For example, nothing is more ugly among human figures than satyrs, fawns centaurs, and tritons; and to them may nevertheless be given beauty and grace, by studying the propriety of their nature. In the human parts of the centaurs one can shew the strength of a horse, uniting the bones more strongly than in a man : in the satyrs, one should make known the avidity of its goaty nature : in a triton the legerity and subtilty of skin, and its viscidty, and the muscles, without the appearance of that hot substance which comes from the blood, and in sanguinary animals swells the veins and flesh. The same ought to be understood in all other things, in which by observing propriety one shall attain the union of variety, from whence arises grace.

## XII

*Of the Proportions of the Human Body.*

Infinite are the descriptions of the proportions of the human body, but scarce any two accord. Those which I have read are not very clear, nor do I believe they can give to painters a just idea of the subject. Besides that, some authors have limited too much the combinations that could produce an uniform proportion in the figures. Others, and among whom is Albert Durer, have explained a great number and variety of proportions; but they serve for nothing, except to those who would wish to imitate his taste. I shall therefore also say something on this subject, which might serve for all tastes, founding it upon nature and art.

It is a general maxim to divide a figure in a determinate number of heads or faces; but this method will be good for sculptors only, and not for painters, who never see the heads just, because the perspective hides at least one third of the fourth superior part; and the width of the members cannot be measured with such exactness as they are measured by sculptors, because they would appear meagre and straight upon the plain surface, in opposition to what it appears by the perspective; because as we see all things with two eyes, we see the contours of things greater than the just diameter; and this happens in nature as well as in statues, but not in painting. The ancients also ob-

served that, and therefore we see, that their bas-reliefs are thicker than their statues; to be understood, the beautiful bas-reliefs, comparing them with the contemporary statues.

Painters have occasion to use variety infinitely more than sculptors, and of course have less subjections. Raphael, in a certain sense only multiplied the taste of the ancients of the second order, by uniting it with a certain truth of which sculpture has not availed, either from rule or from taste, of all sorts of proportions, without being able to decide if one were better than an other; and I know some of his figures, which have little more than six heads and an half, a proportion which would not be sufferable in any other one Raphael.

The structure of the human body has such a symmetry, that it gives the idea of its motion, and this concordance of members is such, that to be able to produce that effect, one has to observe, what is called correctness of design. I shall therefore proceed to treat of this succinctly, proposing that which one ought to do to obtain it.

The figure which one would wish to make being determined, one may design the head of the size one likes, observing, notwithstanding, for a rule, that the smallest head a painting admits of, is the ninth part of the figure, and the largest is a sixth part; these two dimensions are the two extremes; the general size being of an eighth or a seventh part of the figure. The neck should then be made equal to half of the head. . . .

## NOTE of the EDITOR.

NOTWITHSTANDING I have studied with indefatigable pains to extract from the sketches of Mengs, the rules which he would wish to give upon the proportions of the human body, I have found it impossible to compose from his fragments any thing which can give satisfaction, and serve for rules in a matter so important and delicate; from whence I have thought it proper to suppress the remainder of that chapter, in order not to expose myself by proposing errors for rules.

Whoever would wish to know the proportions of the head only, may have recourse to Winkelman, where he explains the system of Mengs, in his first edition of the *History of the Arts*. But I believe, that not even Winkelman comprehended well that matter, and his French translator compleatly disfigured it; so that in the last edition of that book, this article is almost suppressed. As for that of the Italian translation, recently published at Milan, it appears to me it has compleatly finished to confuse and obscure the poor author.

It is in the power alone of some learned artist of fine taste, and who has studied the works of Mengs; but this is not to be hoped, except from a youth well educated in the right rudiments of the art, and not from those already professors, who hold nothing for good, except what their own blind practice had imbibed in their early years, and know not how,

to leave off in old age, nor can suffer that their contemporary, Mengs, should rise above them, and become their master.

Those either do not look at his works, or else they look at them with pre-occupation, and lacerate them without having seen them. This is a fact; and in Rome happens frequent proofs of it. It happened a little time since, that whilst in a company of artists, and of *dilettanti* of every kind, they observed and praised two portraits of a young Venetian, a comical painter, not Roman, but of a country which has never produced painters or sculptors, even of the middling kind (although it buys sculptures and paintings at a high price), hearing that this esteemed youth was copying the portrait of Pope Rezzonico, done by Mengs, said, (*petulanti splene cachino*); that his pencil would lose instead of gaining by that study. He, however, was ignorant that the aforesaid youth, during the time he had been at Rome, had studied only the paintings of Mengs, and particularly that of the Cabinet of the *Papiri*; which have been laterly engraven. Harpies could not have done worse. It has happened to these paintings, as well as to those of the rooms of the Vatican, that they still continue to engrave them; by which Mengs said, that they translated Raphael into Venetian. The sale of them is great, notwithstanding, and will be so as long as amateurs are intelligent men.

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## P R E F A C E.

**I** SHOULD not attempt to write a preface to the following Translation, were it not to apologize for so arduous an undertaking, which I am truly sensible required a man of great talents and no inferior erudition; but the love I have for the Author, both as a writer and an artist, made me hazard this feeble exposition of his abilities, in hopes of being of service to young students who cannot read his works in the languages of the original publications, and with the desire of giving pleasure to others who for mere amusement may peruse this Translation, which certainly will contain matter truly interesting either to the Literati, the Artist, or the Amateur.

Mengs, as an Author, is justly admired by all those who have read his works in the languages in which they have been published, namely, in the Spanish and Italian, by the same Editor, the Chevalier Don Joseph Nicholas D'Azara, Spanish Minister



at Rome. As an Artist, no unprejudiced person can ever have seen his best works without speaking of him with the greatest rapture and delight.

I have visited the capital of Spain where the paintings of Mengs appear in all their greatness; and every one who has travelled through Spain must be sensible how high a name he bears in that Country, where not to admire him (as an ingenious author has observed) is almost a violence against Church and State; an enthusiasm supported not by the wild rumor or folly of a day, but authorized by men of undoubted taste and knowledge in the profession. Almost every court in Europe has wished to possess some paintings from his hand. Poland raised and supported him as long as it was able to support itself; Rome acknowledges him as her greatest ornament; Russia, Naples, Florence courted him; and Spain looks on the ever-living monuments of his departed genius with all the ardour of religious adoration: from all these honors one must naturally be led to suppose he was not of the most common and ordinary rank of mankind.

The following works were originally written in various languages, and as the author could not be equally brilliant and correct in all, some parts will undoubtedly be found more excellent than others. The style and clearness of the sentiments must

naturally have suffered, but however, the ideas and profundity of his knowledge in the arts will always appear the same.

His papers were found very confused, and although they were regulated by the Italian Editor with the desire of correctness, yet in reducing the whole to one language, and by apparent confusion in other respects, the sense has been left in some parts very obscure, and the style and phrases, in many places, have remained inelegant.

It has not been my view either to correct the style, or add to the elegance of this work, fearing that by producing a forced or affected improvement, I might have impaired the original ideas of the author, who never wrote any thing without well considering what he wrote, and whose genuine sentiments will be of much more value than all the affectation of a brilliant style; in which, notwithstanding, he will not be found deficient where his original language appears verbatim. I have neither the leisure or abilities to afford me a hope of producing a truly perfect and elegant translation, but an useful and just one is what I aim at, and in which I hope to be successful. I have endeavoured to render the sentiments of the author as plain and intelligible as I am able, and as he confesses to have written this work for Artists, (who are not all Literati) I hope I have pursued the most desirable end. Criticism

will therefore be done away, as my only views in the following translation were those of amusement, and the desire of making the author better known to the English; and at the same time I lament, that no one of superior abilities has attempted it before me, to have done him all the justice he deserves: however, I trust the following translation will be found to contain the original ideas of the author, and that it will convince every one of his abilities as a writer; and his famous piece in All-souls College Oxford will ever be a sufficient specimen to give an idea of him as an artist.\*

#### THE TRANSLATOR.

\* The subject of this picture is our Saviour in the garden: it consists of two figures in the foreground, highly finished, and beautifully painted. It was ordered by a gentleman of that College whilst on his travels through Spain; but being limited to the price, he was obliged to choose a subject of few figures. This gentleman relates a singular anecdote of Mengs, which will further show the profundity of his knowledge and discernment in things of antiquity. Whilst an esteemed Author, well known and valued in the Musical World, was abroad collecting materials for his History of Music, he found at Florence an ancient statue of Apollo, with a bow and fiddle in his hand: this, he considered, would be sufficient to decide the long contested point, whether or not the ancients had known the use of the bow. He consulted many people to ascertain the certainty if this statue were really of antiquity; and at last Mengs was desired to give his opinion, who, directly as he had examined it, without knowing the cause of the inquiry,

said " there was no doubt but that the statue was of antiquity, but that the arms and fiddle had been recently added " This had been done with such ingenuity that no one had discovered it before Mengs; but the truth of the same was not to be doubted. Mengs has done but few paintings for England except copies; one however he did for Lord Cooper, another for Sir R. C. Hoare, and a few more for others, of which I shall give an account; and there are a few beautiful portraits and pieces of his in France, which are not mentioned in the list of his Paintings.

*PAINTINGS done for England by A. R. MENGO*

The Holy Family for Count Cooper, done at Florence 6 feet 7 by 5.

Another Holy Family 7 feet by 5.

A Sibyl in possession of an Englishman.

Octavian and Cleopatra, with many figures, on canvass done for Sir R. C. Hoare.

A Magdalen half figure.

Christ after the Resurrection, with the Magdalen on her knees; on wood; done for the University of Oxford.

A copy of the School of Athens, for the Duke of Northumberland.

Portrait of the late Arch-Bishop of Salisbury.

Andromeda and Perseus, intended for England, but was taken by a French Privateer, and at last was bought in France by Mons. de Sartine, minister of the marine.

A Sketch in clare obscure of the Resurrection, was intended for the great painting for Salisbury Cathedral, 30 palms in height. It was begun, but his death prevented its being finished.

*ENGRAVINGS from his PAINTINGS.*

St. John the Baptist, and

The Holy Mary Magdalen from the originals in possession of the King of Spain—engraved by Carmona.

Our Lord after the Resurrection, when he appears to the Magdalen, said to be engraved by the same.

The Madonna and Child, engraved by Molpato.

The Saint half figure, mentioned above, engraved by Molpato.

And from a design of his, Christ in the garden, done from Carmona, and engraved by Molpato. A sketch in the collection of the Duke of Northumberland.











